

# THE DOUBLE DEALER

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# The DOUBLE DEALER

*".....I can deceive them both by speaking the truth."*

## THE IMMORTALS

ONE hears a deal of foolishness in regard to the immortality of works of art. Men otherwise quite sane grow lyric over the judgment of posterity. They assert confidently that a book or a play is a fine thing and will live, a sort of reverberation of the older dictum that Master Quagmire has lead a good life and will go to heaven. George Moore, with his tongue at least, slightly in his cheek, has declared that a fine sonnet dropt from an aeroplane in the Sahara Desert will be found and recognized, apparently if it be good enough. "Literature," says James Branch Cabell, "is a starveling cult kept alive by the literary" which suggests an order of spectacled male vestal virgins guarding the authentic fire of Lamb and Dickens and Villon and Dante against the encroachment of the Philistines. Yet it seems they quarrel over which spark to nurse, for I have heard one member of this "starveling cult" assert that Dickens was the greatest master of prose that ever wrote in English, whereas another brother declared to me that Dickens was simply a second-rate hack who wrote rather inferior novels. Numerous brilliant writers, notably Arthur Machen, have tried to analyze the ineffable quality which, superficial-

ity, subject-matter and mannerism aside, makes for essential permanence in literature. One is reminded of the worthies who watch a death-bed for the moment when the "soul" escapes.

The obvious answer to all this palaver about the permanence of Art and the immortality of its works is that nothing is immortal. If some strayed reveller of the heavens in the shape of a comet should collide with us tomorrow, to what pocket in the illimitable ether would the fame of Shakespeare's sonnets go winging?

More interesting it is to consider the quality of this *tentative* immortality. Certainly it is largely accidental. Antony presented Cleopatra with the library of Pergamos containing two hundred thousand volumes of the works of Greek authors. Says Remy de Gourmont. "Greek Literature in Didot's edition is contained in sixty-one volumes. Literature fared the same as an army which has been decimated. The dead are buried and the survivors become heroes."

Here is another view of immortality in letters. Since the invention of printing with its modern facilities, barring a cataclysm it is reasonable to suppose that practically everything written today will be preserved for centuries. Those works which contain rare quali-



ties only appreciable to discriminating intellects will continue to delight the few capable of tasting their flavor; but the great masses will continue to be thrilled by the same sort of stuff which thrills the masses today, only brought up to date. Is it reasonable to assume that the populace will change? Remember reading has been made democratic.

There is another fact for the sniper of prospective immortals to ponder. Let him consider the nature of the books, or for that matter, the crumbling statues and pictures which have survived and are vaunted immortal by us poor creatures of a moment. Can he sincerely subscribe to the "greatness" of some of the Latin poets? Let him compare the work of any columnist in the daily newspapers. The Laocoon atrocity, and the sculpture of any graveyard mechanic. Which suffers by comparison, a good Broadway review or the "Frogs" of Aristophanes? If you have really read the latter you will not be shocked by the juxtaposition. With open eyes let him regard the daubs of the primitive Italian painters and then tell me whether he can discover the greatness of feeling and touch which have been read into them. What about the armless statue called Venus di Milo? Does she represent the ultimate word in female beauty? Did her unknown chiseler ever intend that she should? And sacrilege! Was she ever intended to represent Venus and not Juno?

Outside the sanction of the schools which necessarily dubs great what survives, subject matter largely determines the "immortality" or the tentative immortality of works of art. Cabell says that in time the morality or immorality

of an artist's life becomes an inconsequential affair and only his work is important. Quite the reverse is true, however, of his work, if we are considering its mortal permanence—or better, its longevity. Surely it is because Bunyan pointed a moral rather than adorned a tale that he is known today. Why otherwise, is "The Vicar of Wakefield" included in every school curriculum? Or Walter Scott? Practically all fiction read in the schools has been chosen not for its literary value, but either for its obvious moral or its relative innocuousness to current codes.

On the other side of the picture, Boccaccio has persisted for his pornography. Smut aside, there has never been a drearier collection of tales than the Decameron offers. What of the Heptameron, and the later Latins, and Sterne and Rabelais and nearer today, "Mlle. de Maupin" and Paul de Koch? Hand on your heart, is it their literary style or the subjects they treat that make them read? Do readers appreciate the remarkable fluidity and color of Poe's style quite as much as the shudder and shiver he evokes? Whether morality, lasciviousness or sensation be the tag, it is subject matter which has been the embalming fluid in ninety-nine per cent of the world's classics. The literary judgment of posterity, then, resolves itself into a myth. Immortality or rather survival depends on the sanction of morality, that of the academy, (the two are almost the same). It depends on the work of art's moral appeal or its immoral appeal. But much more it depends on the book, statue, painting surviving natural accident and the caprice of men in power, or perhaps on



some absurd mouse overturning or not overturning a lighted candle.

The moral to all this verbiage is simple. Write to amuse yourself, paint to amuse yourself or leave pencil and easel alone. He who works for posterity is a fool as likely to be misunderstood by another generation of jackasses as by his own. If he craves an absurd immortality that he cannot personally experience, he will find a simple act like setting fire to the temple of Diana at Ephesus or the bombing of a cathedral less laborious and a myriad times more effective.



## THE JELLYBEAN

**S**TORIED *Nouvelle Orleans*, city of caprice and originality, font of the quaint and the fantastic, has recently added to her much betufted turban another coveted feather. Though *Ma'mselle Nouvelle Orleans*, famous for her whims and piquancies, has got in the past many a gaudier plume, none, I believe, surpasses for sheer oddity this latest trophy. First to discover the highball (*ruffignac*), namer and concocter of the now almost legendary cocktail, the much "brewted" gin fizz, the inimitable sazerac, and various and sundry liqueurs and potations (alas for yesterday); mistress of cuisine; mother of the "blues," the shimmy-sha-wobble, and jazz; first also to dub her hard-boiled brethren hoodlums—*Ma'mselle Nouvelle Orleans* now comes forth, elects and names the jellybean. What means this strange appellation? Our

ever alert American humorists from 'Gene Field and George Ade to Ring Lardner and Johnny Weaver seem somehow totally unaware of this remarkable discovery, the honor of which, I am told, goes to a minion of the local press. Though hearkening back some several years, the exact date of its acception remains doubtful.

Jellybean, *Americano* for *genus gelibeanum*, neuter as you note, is derived from the adjective *gelus*, that is, soft, mucilaginous, and *beanum* or *beanus*, in the masculine declension, that is, head, block, or, in this instance, bean. *Ergo*, soft-head, jellybean.

*Genus gelibeanum*, blood brother to the flapper, cousin germane to the vamp, despised butt of cop, hoodlum and soda jerker, is a distinct and interesting species of jejune America. He is perhaps best described in his mental and physical make-up, for his morals like his sex are but vaguely defined. Mentally we discover him a potential moron, the mind located somewhere in the vicinity of belt and breeches. Physically his dimensions vary between that of the robustious gum-drop (who, by the by, is fast obscuring the flapper in these parts) and the anaemic counter-jumper.

His natural habitat is the entrance to the soft drink emporium or corner drug store, Main Street, America. There he is to be found in flocks, coveys or pairs as the exigency warrants, peering, grinning, or staring vacuously at the passers in and out, trying his very deucedest to look the man-about-town. A devilish wicked fellow he would be thought, a rake with the skirted of the species. His secret ambition one glimpses in his ridiculous attempt at the



ancient art of ogling. However, my friend, the jellybean is not in any sense a naughty boy. He is at once mild, harmless and questive, exhibiting a *naïveté* that in these "sophisticated days" is astounding. One wonders from what stock he stems. Of course, being a prohibition, post-war product, his age seldom exceeding nineteen summers, much in him may be condoned. His viriler elder brother, long since convalesced from the "late unpleasantness" will have none of him. He begets naught but contempt from his subtler, maturer sister. He is never known to have puffed a stogie. His favorite beverage is chocolate ice cream soda with a dash of peppermint essence for kick. His heroes are Wallace Reid and the village ladies' man. His pseudo-Kuppenheimer hand-me-downs seem never quite to fit him about neck and buttocks. He neatly pins his *chapeau de feutre* to prevent mussing a carefully bandolined mop. His breeches are invariably abbreviated above and below, accentuating hinder parts, which, owing to this congestion, take on a decidedly plus aspect. Mauve or pea-green knitted tie, *crepe-de-chine* shirt, frat pin, and tanish brogues complete his sartorial fixtures. He is a puppy, a petter, a percy-boy, and a popinjay all in one—and he isn't. He is something more. He is a jellybean.

But don't waste your pity on him. Nature has been very good to him. He neither needs nor does he look for pity. He possesses that "certain something" which renders him more or less immune to hostile criticism. He is tender, bold, distraight, cute, callow and self-sufficient. I find myself waxing effusive. The sub-

ject is indeed absorbing. It cannot be treated meagerly. It needs air and space and time.

But if this fillip has whetted your appetite and you must have more of the stuff I beg to refer you to three forthcoming volumes on the subject which I have had the rare privilege of reading in proof. The first, "The Jellybean: His Meaning and Menace," by Beatricks Freudfax, author of "Advice to the Gumdrop," though delectable in spots, leaves me quite cold. The second, "The Evolution of the Bean," by Doctor Frank Cocci, you will find infinitely more satisfactory. The third, "Why Am I?" by Clarence Creme de Cocoa, an excellent bit of psychoanalysis, positively delights me. Clarence admits in his preface that he belongs to that steadily increasing class of young humanity now known to you as *genus gelibeantum*. His connotations on the text of Dr. Cocci's tome, which it appears he too read in manuscript, are remarkable in their penetration. Besides a charming appendix devoted to a resumé of his reasons for existence, the young author has compiled an excellent glossary of jellybeanisms. The whole book is intriguing. A superb work! And, mind you, these gifted writers are all local *literati*. Another feather in our cap!

Ah, *Ma'mselle Nouvelle Orleans*, your fame is now assured. Though conquistador, pirate, buccaneer, gentleman duelist, beautiful quadroom, *ruffignac*, gin fizz and cocktail have seen their day and vanished, the jellybean is still yours and bids fair so to remain, a growing monument to your perspicacity, Aphrodite-like, defying oblivion.

Oscar, the curtain!



## LO! THE CRITICS

**N**EVER do I pick up a piece of literary criticism without hope that at last I shall find one critic without a whine in him. But I am always, soon or late, disappointed. Of all classes, critics, if you believe them, form the one which is the most sinned against. Pages of criticism entertain me no longer, but drum into my consciousness only another and another: "Lo! I, the Critic, have been sinned against! See, here! Or there! Just see how I have been sinned against!"

I feel violent. I have been thinking of those critics who, directly or by indirection, by condemnation or by praise, show under what circumstances only and by what method, masterpieces are written. I have been meditating upon a whole string of critics, touching back to Mathew Arnold, who elected himself to a kind of godhead; skirting along by Brander Mathews, cool, dictatorial school master; William Lyon Phelps, amiable and perhaps afraid of the growing world; Van Wyck Brooks, who knows best, with God, the limitations of the mind of New England Victorians and Mark Twain; J. C. Powys, lost soul wandering about in his own obscurity; Stuart P. Sherman, anti-bigot, of liberal intolerance; John Erskine and Bliss Perry, dusks of a departing day; and a sprinkling of professors and editors of literary pages who "earn a little bitter bread by the condemnation of trash which they do not read, and the praise of excellence which they do not understand." I see them rolling about in their chairs with the ponderous gravity

of a Dr. Johnson. "Hector of the glancing helm hath set himself to say somewhat." I hear them cough, see them look wise, roll their eyes, just before they deliver of themselves wisdom to make Olympus quake. They are remembered, George Moore reminds us, by what they fail to understand. Whatever the dust they raise in ingratiating apologies, they *do* in the end act like little gods who see no reason, except for argument's sake, in getting themselves out of the way to let humanity judge.

They insist they seek diligently after the Truth. The bother is they are not *always* after it, but are always *finding* it, and taking time out to put what they've found in indelible black for the ages. They make certain the truth is fresh. It's the only way to sell their book or article. And once they've found their saleable truth, they busy themselves caulking up its leaky sides, and neglect to hunt any longer. For them at least, for this one thesis of theirs at least, truth is found. There remains only the business of generously forcing that truth on other folks, and the subsequent hunt for another fresh truth to put in their next contribution.

How many a poem, novel and play I have enjoyed heartily, only one day to find an "acknowledged" critic condemn it because this wasn't done, or because that wasn't done; because the author hadn't "the world view"; because he wasn't analytical enough, because he was too analytical; because he suffers a "blind-side" peculiarly evident to this or that particular critic; because he is too sensual, because he is not sensual enough; because he lacks the "scientific



spirit", because he's got more than his share of it. One-eyed giants! They used to disconcert me. But no more. Once I had a friend who could haul about historical dates by the scruff of the neck and with an assurance and an arrogance almost incredible. He amazed me. He awed me. I felt humble in his presence. Until one day I checked up some of his dates, and found most of them wrong! We can't check up the "historical dates" of the literary-critics. Critics call them standards. Mine are no more right than yours and yours are no more right than mine. Yet we are told that "without standards we critically perish." According to critics, all but the Critical Cult have perished anyway. Let us continue to perish then, cheerily O! rather than adopt for our standards those which hot-house professors and artists turned priests select for general consumption.

Huneker wrote somewhere that the only criticism of music is the playing thereof. The only criticism of a book, I suppose, is the reading thereof. And whether a book is good for me or you depends on how it *reads* to me or you and not on its appeal to Professor Tom or Dick.

Don't misunderstand. Criticism is not a synonym for condemnation. I'm not advocating New England conservatism or insisting on "constructive criticism." That would be plagiarizing schoolmarms and U. S. senators. I'm urging "*No faith at all in critics!*" Not even in me—which shows my superior tolerance, God save my soul! Let nobody throw critical pepper in your eyes! "The prime office of criticism," we are told, "is to make our absorption and our

enjoyment of things that feed the mind as aware of itself as possible." I grant the professional critic, with reluctance and reservations, that one office. But he must be careful to walk more circumspectly than I am walking, this one violent moment. He must walk humbly. And he must never cry "Verboten! Verboten!" to anything.

Taste is an individual matter. My taste is mine, your taste is yours, and neither belongs to the critic. It is full of mystery, taste is. Art is full of mystery, too. And if the artist himself often cannot and does not recognize art when he sees it, if the making of his own masterpiece is so much a mystery even to him, where under God's high heaven do the critics get their omniscience? "This is as it may turn out," says the modest Artist, busily writing; "Here's looking at you!" "Fudge!" cries the modest Critic; "Here's *how!*"

It ought to give the Critic pause when a Pater, in a moment of dusting off his own offenses, could write: "Critical efforts to limit art *a priori*... are always liable to be discredited by the facts of the artistic production." It ought to help the critic understand that his "cause to effect" and his "effect to cause" conclusions are of importance only because they may be entertaining, and entertaining chiefly because they give us something else to doubt.

Read your play or your novel or your poem, if you like it, and be damned to the critics! And the critics be damned! The world is full of buzzing bees who thrive on beautiful flowers; who suck them dry and advise the plant how the flowers could have been fashioned more



to their taste. But the world, too, is full of gardeners who resent their lepidopteral cheek.



## POLITICS AND THE ARTIST

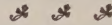
The despots of Italy, those infamous hyenas who with good reason feared the impact of a righteous dagger at all moments, would have nobody close to their persons but men of letters, artists and scholars, jugglers and mountebanks.

One cannot be sure that the commentary on this practice is that the men of letters were cowardly rogues. It may be that the despots believed so, but most likely the truth of the matter is that they relied on the artist's notorious indifference to political affairs. Ezzelino, the child of hell, could have had no better crony than a ballad-maker. It was nothing to poets and peddlers of tales that this duke or that was extremely severe. If His Excellency threw peasants to the dogs the men of letters, artists and scholars were not likely to stab him for it, so long as the dinner was good. Politics was nothing to them.

And politics is very little to them now. It is a safe wager that four out of five artists in America—in literature, music and painting—never vote. The men of letters and artists of today realize as well as those of the Renaissance that politics, all round the circle, is a yowling farce. They neither vote nor influence votes. They are as oblivious of politics as dormice and are not likely

to assail or worry their heads about any government either because it is tyrannical or because it is ridiculous.

Dantes, Miltons and Shelleys are rare in more ways than one.



## WHEREIN WE YAWN

EVERY day, almost every hour, the editorial sanctum of this magazine admits various persons who very flatteringly ask my professional advice and seek information. Noticeably scattered among the horde of callers are young gentlemen and ladies from the newspapers. Frequently they are doing "assignments," and for the convenience of their articles, they entreat me from behind their horn-rimmed spectacles to avow that this pleasant old planet is becoming a fitter place to live in, and that mankind is fighting the battle with a more marked discrimination of his five senses.

These well intentioned young hopefuls would have me admit that the public taste is improving. Frankly, I cannot endorse their view. I consider that public taste is as ever invariably shifting, especially since the recent *kriegspiel*, and the shift seems to me to be not for the better.

To test my conviction I have but to walk the highways of a great American metropolis and observe the antics of the mob. What do I find? Men drinking non-alcoholic beer which savors of soapy carbonated water; reading magazines whose covers feature scantily at-



tired femininity and whose contents edify us with sex matter termed "snappy" or "saucy"; or gloating over still other periodicals which make no pretense to being anything but lewd and succeed by virtue of their sincerity; reading—and swallowing whole—advertisements of moving picture trusts which talk about "The Art of the Silent Drama" and the cost (in millions) of the production; smoking cigarettes bearing the crest of the Duke of Connaught, which are made in Virginia and cannot be found outside these United States; filling themselves in expensive restaurants where the food is bad and the service worse, leaning up against the ruins of old bars and imbibing sticky syrups for the conviviality of it—

And women, I find, in ridiculous gowns which reveal their nudity, often unlovely to behold; who daub them-

selves to the point where the purpose of artifice becomes meaningless; who line up at the polls and evince their ignorance of public matters (an ignorance even more astounding than the ignorance of the male); who dance in public, jowl to jowl, with men to whom they have only just been presented, but who become incensed when an old friend of the family endeavors to "hold hands" in the conservatory; who dabble in art for no other reason than that they have good servants to manage their affairs; and so on, and so on,

And when I have made these casual observations, is it probable that my faith in the public taste is strengthened? I am more inclined to believe that the bourgeois flavor which the populace insists upon will never vanish, and to agree with one of my colleagues who avers that our very civilization is built upon mediocrity.



I have no very great desire to make myself agreeable to you, Caesar, nor to know whether your complexion is light or dark.

—*Catullus*.



# The Chemise of Margarita Pareja

BY LAFCADIO HEARN.

IT is not improbable that some of my readers may have often heard the old women of Lima exclaim, when complaining of the high price of an article:

“What? —why that is dearer than the chemise of Margarita Pareja!”

I should have sought hard to find out who this Margarita Pareja was, whose chemise is so famous, had I not stumbled across an article written by Don Ildefonso Antonio Bermejo, author of a famous work on Paraguay, who, although he touches but very lightly upon the subject of the girl and her chemise, nevertheless has enabled me to solve the riddle, and to bring to light the facts of the story you are going to read.

## I.

Margarita Pareja lived in 1776, or thereabouts; and was the most beloved and petted daughter of Don Raimundo Pareja, gentleman of Santiago, and collector-general of Callao.

The girl belonged to that class of Lima beauties whose charms would captivate the very devil himself, and make him cross himself and even drive him to distraction.

About that time there arrived from Spain a gallant youth named Don Luis de Alcazar. He had a rich bachelor uncle in Lima, an old-fashioned Aragonese, exceedingly haughty, and unspeakably proud of his ancestry.

It is reasonable to suppose that while

awaiting the chance to inherit from his uncle, Luis lived as poorly as a church mouse, and was continually haunted by melancholy. When I say that his smallest requirements were obtained upon credit, to be paid for as soon as he could mend his fortune, I believe that I state his condition with sufficient truthfulness.

On the occasion of the procession of Santa Rosa, Alcazar first saw the beautiful Margarita. The girl caught his eye and ensnared his heart. He presented her with a bunch of flowers; and although she responded neither by a direct yes or no, she allowed it to be inferred by her smiles and other artifices of the feminine arsenal that the lad was by no means displeasing to her. The truth, as I should confess it, is that they fell over head and ears in love with each other.

As the lovers forgot there was such a thing as arithmetic, Don Luis never dreamed that his present poverty could be any obstacle to the success of his love affair. He called upon Margarita's father, and without any preamble whatever boldly demanded the hand of his daughter.

Don Raimundo did not entertain the petition favorably; and dismissed the postulant with many elaborate courtesies, observing that Margarita was still too much of a child to think of marriage, and that in spite of her eighteen summers she was still attached to her dolls.

But that was not the true cause of



the refusal. The fact was that Don Raimundo did not care to become the father-in-law of a *pobreton* (poor devil); and he said as much in confidence to one of his friends, who went directly with the tale to Don Honorato, as the proud Aragonese uncle was named. The latter, who was haughtier than the Cid himself, bounded with rage at the news, and cried: "What! Insult my nephew! Many would be only too happy to have a chance of an alliance with that boy;—than whom there is not a finer lad in all Lima. The insolence of the low-born clown alone betrays itself in such a fashion as this. But, after all, what has this miserable, pitiful *collectorcillo* to do with me?"

Margarita, who was born a century before her time, suddenly became as hysterical as a maiden of our own era; she sobbed and pulled out her hair and fainted; and if she did not threaten to poison herself, it was because matches had not yet been invented.

Margarita lost her rosiness, and grew visibly thinner and weaker day by day; talked about becoming a nun, and absolutely refused to listen to reason. She would cry *O de Luis o de Dios!* (either Luis or God) every time the hysterics came on, which was very often. The Santiago caballero became finally much alarmed, and called in doctors and nurses—all of whom swore that the girl was going into consumption, and that the only medicine which could save her was not sold in apothecaries' shops.

"Either marry her to the lad she loves or make her coffin ready!" Such was the doctor's ultimatum.

So Don Raimundo, remembering only that he was a father, rushed without hat

or cloak to the residence of Don Honorato and said to him:

"I have come to beg your consent to the marriage of your nephew with Margarita tomorrow morning; for otherwise the girl will die."

"Oh, utterly impossible! utterly, utterly impossible!!" ironically responded the uncle. "My nephew is only a poor devil, and the man you must seek for your daughter's husband is a rich man, a man of money, a man of large resources!"

The dialogue was a stormy one. The more Don Raimundo supplicated, the more Don Honorato seemed to harden his heart; and both were about to retire from the scene, when Don Luis ventured to break in upon the discussion, saying:

"But, uncle, it is not Christianlike to kill those who have done no wrong."

"Indeed! Am I to understand that you wish to sacrifice yourself for that girl's sake?"

"With all my heart and soul, Uncle y Señor."

"Very well, boy; I consent, since it seems to give you pleasure; but only upon one condition, and that is this: Don Raimundo must swear to me upon the Sacred Host that he will not present his daughter with one single *ochavo*, nor bequeath her in his will even so much as a *real*."

This renewed the quarrel in a new form.

"But, man," cried Don Raimundo, "my daughter has a dowry of twenty thousand duros!"

"We renounce the dowry. The girl must come to the house of her husband with nothing but her shift on."



"At least permit me to marry her with some little formality—her trousseau and furniture and—"

"No, sir—not so much as a pin. If you do not like my terms, renounce them, and let the little one die!"

"But, Don Honorato, try to be reasonable. My daughter must at least have a chemise, in the way of wedding apparel."

"Well, I will yield this point, lest you might think me obstinate. I consent that you give her a bridal chemise; and now let us end the discussion."

Don Raimundo and Don Honorato rode to San Francisco at daybreak next morning; and while kneeling at mass during the elevation of the Host, the former swore according to the compact:

"I swear not to give my daughter anything except the bridal chemise. May

God judge me if I perjure myself."

## II.

And Don Raimundo Pareja kept his oath to the letter; for neither during his life nor at his death did he ever afterward give his daughter anything worth a *maravedi*.

The Flemish laces which adorned the bridal chemise cost two thousand seven hundred duros, according to Bermejo, who seems to have copied the statement from the *Relaciones Secretas* of Ulloa and Don Jorge Juan.

Item, the string which confined the chemise at the neck was a chain of brilliants valued at thirty thousand morlascoes.

Assuredly, Margarita Pareja's chemise deserved its fame.

Lima, 1879.



## The Moon's Not Always Beautiful

BY EDWARD SAPIR.

The moon's not always beautiful,  
The snow's not always white,  
I've seen the sun at a very noon  
Cower in cloud-light.

This must be why a golden girl  
Whose face is pure song  
Can sometimes clench a savage fist  
And sing a note wrong.

This must be why a silver girl  
Whose face is a very moon  
Can sometimes savagely grow dark  
And blow a monsoon.



# The Laugh

BY JULIAN KILMAN.

**B**EN NEAR'S laugh began with a series of deep-lunged, Gargantuan Ho-Ho-Ho's and in its beginning was almost infectious. But as the cachinnations continued, the thin quality that crept into the timbre of the voice gave to a discerning ear the hint of an uneasy mind. This ripened into certitude as, the tongue commencing to clutter and the throat ceasing to function, the laugh degenerated into mere mouthings, with the laugher himself doubled up in an apparent access of soundless mirth. Some there were in the little hamlet of Ovid who honestly enjoyed the spectacle of Ben in his risibilities; others were tolerantly amused; while a third and more sensitive group frankly shuddered.

The off-spring of a Nicholas County woman and an exotic sloe-black eyed French Canadian who years before had incidentally drifted into Ovid and as incidentally drifted out again, Ben Near had come to be an institution. The man was slightly less than two hundred pounds in weight, toed in excessively, and had hair so thin and light that his scalp was practically bare. From the father he had inherited his black eyes; from the mother his fair skin.

The methods of causing Ben to perpetrate this laugh were various. That involving least circumlocution was merely to whack him unexpectedly on the back. This was a procedure much in favor with Adam Zavitz, a rustic exemplar of Rabelaisian humor, who re-

sided up the river just beyond the Fullmer farm where Ben made his home.

The method that gave evidence of greatest finesse—and one much in vogue with the school-boys—was to make a sketch of two figures, man and woman, walking side by side. The art employed needed to be but the most rudimentary. What particularly intrigued Ben were the letters "B E N and M A R Y" which the artist never failed to append, the idea being that it was a representation of Ben and a supposititious wife out for a stroll. As Ben was unmarried, the recondite inference never failed to send him off into peals of laughter. Workmen in the fields half a mile away, hearing the tumult of Ben's laugh, would straighten their tired backs and exclaim: "Someone's showed a picture to Ben," or "That's Adam Zavitz coddin' with Ben. Gosh A'mighty, ain't that a laugh for you!"

Most Ovidians called Ben a half-wit. Others there were who had doubts as to the entirety of Ben's affliction. On occasions he played the *enfant terrible*, his brain functioning in a strikingly direct manner. He was lazy and many wondered at the toleration of him by John Fullmer, a hard-headed farmer who for years had permitted Ben to sleep in his barn, even though the big fellow did only such labor about the premises as he was actually unable to avoid.

It goes without saying that Ben was the object of many rude pastoral pleas-

antries. The most extravagant of these was Ben's induced courtship of Adam Zavitz's seventeen-year-old brother habited as a young woman. For six weeks almost nightly the hideous travesty continued, with the countryside looking on. It finally culminated one evening in the actual ceremony of marriage. This typically bucolic affair was followed by a law-suit in which Ben, as plaintiff sued the Zavitz brothers for \$10,000 damages to his wounded sensibilities. For some time the attorneys gravely had tried the case (destined to become a local *cause celebre*) when the old Judge, suddenly struck by the absurdity of the matter and more than half suspecting the lawyers of lending themselves to the comedy, sharply reprimanded them and threw it out of court.

Never in all the thirty-five years of Ben's existence had he exhibited any ugliness of temper. Hence, at the conclusion of the mock trial, it was no surprise when Adam Zavitz, ex-defendant strode up to Ben Near, ex-plaintiff, standing on the court house steps, slapped him on the back, and then beginning with the Ho-Ho's laughed with him through to the end. Zavitz's native genius for mimicry, together with long practice in imitating Ben's laugh, including the very throat cluckings and body contortions, had made his performance a thing of ghastly perfection.

That same evening in the dusk as Ben was returning from the court house, Fullmer overtook him with the buckboard. He drew up and motioned Ben to jump in.

"Well," he began, grimly. "You only played into Zavitz's hands by letting them set you up to that trial."

"I know, I know," mumbled Ben, with his unduly mobile lips. "I only played into their hands; that's it; played into their hands."

"Next time you'll follow my advice," said Fullmer, patiently.

"That's right, Fullmer. I'll follow your advice."

"You see, Ben," went on the farmer. "You ain't as bright as most folks. You might as well face the fact."

"Yes," agreed Ben. "They're too sharp for me, now ain't they?"

"That's what I said."

"Yes, that's it; too sharp for me—too sharp for me—too sharp—"

"Well, great heavens!" finally burst from Fullmer. "You've said it enough."

"That's right, Fullmer I'll stop."

The other lapsed into silence. Presently he said: "I'll want you to work pretty soon with the Teal boys over in that field of rye."

"I—I—got to go to the village pretty regular," said Ben.

"What for?"

"To get my mail. That mail carrier, he won't bring it. He'll forget it, Fullmer."

"Your mail! Why, switch it all, Ben, you don't get any mail. When did you ever get any mail?"

"Last spring I got a letter," defended Ben.

"A printed circular! Won't you *ever* learn? If I hadn't a-stopped you, you'd a-sent \$10 to that scalawag on his promise to get you a wife by advertisement. Adam Zavitz sent them fakirs your name."

Again there came a silence.

"Zavitz's carryin' the thing too far," muttered the farmer to himself. "It's



got to stop."

"Yes," said Ben. "It's got to stop."

The farmer grunted. "I've let you stay in my barn for more than six years; and as long as you're willing to work, I'm willing to let you stay. But you're loafing considerably of late. Now I want you to turn in and help. The first thing I want you to do is to kill off the rats in the barn. Yesterday I noticed they'd chewed the top half off Bess' new yoke."

Ben betrayed quick interest.

"That's right. I can't hardly sleep for them runnin' around and rattlin' things. I'll set the traps, Fullmer, first thing."

Next day it rained and Ben spent his time adjusting the steel rat traps. Also in strategic places he left pieces of cheese doctored with rat poison they gave him in the house. One large chunk he placed near the foot of the steps that led to the harness-room. From a box just inside the door, with the patience and immobility of an Oriental, Ben watched that bait. After more than an hour passed, there came a squeak and the watcher detected in the gloom of the barn a rat. It passed one of the open-jawed traps and approached the cheese which it nibbled slightly; then it squealed and ran back; came up again, with trailing tail; listened a moment, flicking its ears suspiciously; and finally went voraciously at the poisoned cheese. In two minutes it was dead.

Suddenly the air was filled with Ho-Ho's of Ben's laugh.

The door of the barn opened. "What you laughing at?" demanded the farmer, stamping in out of the rain.

Ben indicated the dead rodent.

"Humph! He ate some of the poison, I reckon," said Fullmer.

"Yes," assented Ben, eagerly. "He ate some of the poison—and he's dead. He ate some of the poison—and he's dead. He ate—"

"Come on into the house," impatiently broke in the farmer, "or you'll be eating it yourself."

Later that evening Adam Zavitz carrying a lantern made his way along the road leading to Ovid. When opposite the Fullmer place the door opened and Fullmer cried out: "I want to see you a few minutes."

Zavitz came in. He was a big, burly fellow, with a shock of reddish hair and a beefy face. Fullmer motioned him to a chair. Fullmer's wife was bustling about with her supper dishes. She filled a pail with fresh cider and tendered it to Ben who took it and went to the barn without a word. Zavitz remained silent, waiting for Fullmer to speak. The two farmers never had been friendly, and the younger man now sensed that his neighbor had some complaint to make. He thought it might be about that ditch leading away from the swamp.

Not until his wife disappeared into the kitchen with the last of the dishes did the older man speak. Then he said bluntly:

"You've got to stop this fooling with Ben."

"Oh, ho, that's it," breathed Zavitz. "Well," he said, aloud, "What's the harm."

"There ain't any in particular" went on Fullmer, in moderate voice, "and neither is there any good. But that ain't the point. I'm just telling you

that I want it stopped."

Zavitz shifted in his chair. He looked ugly.

"What's it to you anyways?"

"I'm just plain making it my business."

"And if I don't see fit to quit?"

Fullmer was short in stature and considerably older than his visitor. He squared himself in front of Zavitz.

"Ben's a fool. He can't fight. You know that. And I suppose I'm too small and old to lick you. You know that, too. So I'm just asking you as a man to quit it."

Zavitz stood up. "All through?" he asked, sneeringly.

Fullmer's patience was completely exhausted. He flung open the door.

"You can get out of the house," he shouted.

About one o'clock in the morning, when the young farmer, slightly under the influence of liquor, was returning home from the village, he observed a light in the Fullmer barn. This he knew belonged to Ben who was in the habit of sitting up late. Stumblingly he made his way thither.

Ben was seated on a box, apparently in a brown study; three rats were huddled on the floor before him; a pail of cider stood at hand. From this he took a drink.

"Are they dead?" asked Zavitz.

"Yes," answered Ben.

Presently his gaze switched to Zavitz who stood with wobbling uncertainty. The young farmer did not observe Ben's scrutiny; his attention was still fastened on the dead rodents.

Neither did he observe that Ben stealthily dropped something into the pail of cider. It was the contents of a package of rat poison.

"Give me some cider," Zavitz presently demanded.

The half-wit handed over the pail.

Spreading his legs to steady himself, Zavitz elevated the pail to his lips. He opened his mouth.

Over the rim of the pail he happened to catch sight of the sloe-black eyes of the big half-wit. These were wide-open, fixed on him in an extraordinary, fascinated stare.

Zavitz lowered the pail.

"W'ash matter with you you G——d—— fool?" he said.

Then, as he pitched slightly, he raised the pail once more and drank deep.

Ben's face—even the scalp visible through the meager hair—reddened. He began to laugh, swaying from side to side. His deep-lunged Ho-Ho's rocked the air.

And Zavitz, from sheer habit, spacing his cachinnations to a nicety, laughed in unison with the half-wit. Their horrid din filled the mid-night. But in a moment the poison took effect. Zavitz slipped to the floor, his face contorted with pain, his hands gripping his stomach. He died miserably.

Ben kept on laughing.

Half a mile away a load of merry-makers were returning from a dance. To their ears had come the clamor of two men, laughing.

"By God!" exclaimed the driver. "If that ain't Adam Zavitz up there at this time o' night, coddin' Ben Near."



# Two Poems

BY GLENN WARD DRESBACH.

## CALM NEAR THE DESERT.

Worn hills all stilled with sun reach into haze  
That is the dust of opals thinly spread  
On shadowed robes of distance where the days  
Move out majestically to join their dead.  
The spears of bunch-grass glint, and here and there  
A cliff-face stares, scarred, questioning and proud.  
A lizard, swooned in passion of the glare,  
Forgets the hawk dazed in a cage of cloud.

The hunter and the hunted in such sun  
And in such silence have not will to stir.  
In vastness, awed awhile they are as one,  
Frail changing things where days are as they were  
When first a questioning cliff-face deep with scars  
Saw through the haze the questioning eyes of stars.

## CONTRADICTION.

Each day hurt dreams insisted  
That walls be built about  
Their place that no invader  
Might come and drive them out.

Now each day dreams are fading,  
Where many a shadow falls.  
They have not strength to conquer  
Their own unconquered walls.

And each day dreams are crying,  
"O, for a conquest vain  
If it must be, but conquest  
To thrill or hurt again!"

# Arthur Symons and the Puritans

BY HOWARD MUMFORD JONES.

IT is hard to say why the poetry of Arthur Symons has never received the recognition it deserves. He is not a "popular" writer, dwelling rather nearer the difficult air of the iced mountain's top than do the bards whom the Great American Public delighteth to honor. Of course, he wrote *London Nights*, that pernicious volume containing *Bianca*, a poem which Mr. William Morton Payne found too indecent to quote in the chaste columns of the old *Dial*. But the society for immortalizing literature, which raised *Jurgen* to eternal fame, has not yet fallen upon the *Collected Poems* of Symons (though they have been out since 1901), why, only the reader of Mencken's exposé of the eccentricity of the censor can guess, and they continue to be for sale with much that he has written since.

It is easy to understand why Symons will never be read except by those who care tremendously for the processes of art itself, but it is inexplicable why he has been ignored by the critics and historians of the modern poetic movement. A few reviews in American magazines, all unintelligent, save one by Padraic Colum; a forgotten essay by Benjamin De Casseres buried in heaven knows what deceased periodical; a solemn denunciation in the *Shelburne Essays*—this is the sum of American criticism. Mr. Paul Elmer More refers delicately to Symons' poetry as "a waste of shame"; he writes that Symons' themes are "the ambiguities and

unclean curiosities of a swaying will," whatever that means. "There are things," he continues, "it were good for a man, even for a decent poet, not to have written." These gems should be carved over the doors of our Carnegie libraries.

Having thus called for water and washed his hands, the veiled prophet of Shelburne dismisses "the only genuine and adequate representative in English of that widespread condition which we call decadence" with a lofty moral admonition to go get a "simple delight in nature." The spectacle of Arthur Symons weaving a daisy chain with infantile glee is one to which only the pencil of Max Beerbohm can do justice. One can merely point to the Sophoclean irony of the motto on the Shelburnian title page: "Before we can have an American art, there must be an American criticism."

Well, the decadence is over. Symons never took it very seriously, but he took his art with tremendous seriousness, so that his work is the only considerable body of poetry, which remains to us, out of that far-off time. One grows weary of hearing Dowson's *Cynara* quoted by the young, there is so much more in Symons and so little in Dowson. The cold, pale perfection of that lyric, Symons, it is true, never quite achieves; there is a resignation in Dowson which he never attains; but he has written not one, but a dozen, comparable poems, excursions into the world



of weariness and satiety which Dowson found so decorative. Dowson has but two moods: a despairing praise of virginity, a despairing renunciation, but one has only to turn over the pages of *Amoris Victima* to find a psychology of sex amazing in its penetration, in its complexity, in the sheer, sad music that the unadorned lines evoke.

Symons is the most substantial of the decadents because his soul is truly Latin and because he has behind him, as Padraic Colum said, the whole European background. With the rest one feels that decadence is an amusing game, but with Symons it is a creed of art. *The Sphinx* (which is, except for *Reading Gaol*, the only original poem that Oscar Wilde ever wrote) is a triumph of mechanical ingenuity and cold, hard, ungenerous composition. It is *Salammô* without the story. But it never becomes anything else than a piece of mechanical ingenuity, because the idea behind the poem was for Wilde as decorative as the poem itself. Symons has done his *Sphinx*; it is called *Chimaera*, and he got it out of Baudelaire, just as Wilde did, and it is not so good a poem. But Symons has also written verses about Arques, Dieppe, Venice, Madrid, Paris, Antwerp—cities over which he pours the lavender waters of his prose. He has written poems about Chopin and Watteau and the ballet and Rameau and after hearing Madame Dolmetsch play the lute. He has translated Sophocles and D'Annunzio, Calderon and Mallarmé, Heine and the *Pleiade*. When in addition one remembers that he has written luminous criticism on everything from Elizabethan drama to the Russian dancers, one learns to distinguish genuine aestheticism from the

brass imitation of it which the dear public likes to accept. It is a pity that Huneker did not explore the soul of Symons.

Aestheticism with Symons is not a pose, but a philosophy, which he calls symbolism, a name that frightens many people away. Because it is a philosophy, he did the decadent themes better on the whole than anybody else ever did them in English. One turns, for instance, to the section in the *Collected Poems* which contains what he wishes to preserve of *London Nights*. Just preceding it one will find a poem called *For a Picture of Watteau*, which ends:

"Light loves that woke with spring  
This autumn afternoon  
Beholds meandering,  
Still, to the strains of spring.

Your dancing feet are faint,  
Lovers; the air recedes  
Into a sighing plaint,  
Faint, as your loves are faint.

It is the end, the end,  
The dance of love's decease.  
Feign no more now, fair friend!  
It is the end, the end."

This is almost Verlaine and water, but not quite, for there is something else here—that delicate corruption of the spirit, the infinite grace, the ironic malice, which informed the manners of the Regency. For we must not forget that the world of Watteau was a world in which innocence was the last thrill, regret the deepest emotion, a world that had the European background as Wilde and the rest did not. *For a Picture of Watteau* is a fit prelude to a discussion of *London Nights*.

There is nothing very naughty before it, although just afterwards the Philis-

tine may gloat over the Violets and the Biancas which this Catullus sings. Indeed, there is little before this part of the *Poems* that is mature, except perhaps *Javanese Dancers*:

"Twitched strings, the clang of metal, beaten drums,  
Dull, shrill, continuous, disquieting;  
And now the stealthy dancer comes  
Undulantly with cat-like steps that cling.

Smiling between her painted lids a smile,  
Motionless, unintelligible, she twines  
Her fingers into mazy lines,  
The scarves across her fingers twine the while.

One, two, three, four glide forth, and, to and fro,  
Delicately and imperceptibly,  
Now swaying gently in a row,  
Now interthreading slow and rhythmically.

Still with fixed eyes, monotonously still,  
Mysteriously, with smiles inanimate,  
With lingering feet that undulate,  
With sinuous fingers, spectral hands that thrill

In measure while the gnats of music whirr,  
The little amber-colored dancers move,  
Like painted idols seen to stir  
By the idolaters in a magic grove."

This is very good, although Symons would not write the last line nowadays, but it suffers, like much of the early work, from a feverish concern over the *mot juste*, and the disillusion, too, in *Silhouettes* is often too much like Heine and too little like Arthur Symons. But the poem on the Watteau picture, itself not as good as *Javanese Dancers*, is a better introduction to Symons. It is the door by which Symons entered the decadence, bringing with him the exquisite polish, the refined malice, the superb condescension of the Duc de Richelieu.

Mr. Paul Elmer Moore accuses Symons of wearying first of the flesh and then of the delights of the soul; after this, he says, the poet passes into disillusion which is itself illusion. I do not precisely understand all this jugglery of Mr. More's. That critic seems to me to preach about the most disastrous disillusion in the world, and he calls it joy, which is the more amazing. But it would be truer, I think, to say that Symons was never under the illusion of the loves of the flesh or of the spirit either. When he came to write of things sexual he did not, for instance, write with the infinite gusto of that blustering giant, Swinburne; not yet like a nasty little boy as Wilde often did; nor yet with the feminine and timid accuracy of the virginal Dowson. He wrote, instead, with perfect sincerity, but at the same time with the half-disdainful manner of a fine gentleman. He wrote also like a psychologist. Was it Tertullian who said, *post coitem, triste?* However that may be, Symons is neither Wilde nor Swinburne. It was the pose of the eightennineties to seem preternaturally aged, but no one succeeds very well except Max Beerbohm, who took it as a joke, and Arthur Symons, who accepted it as a code of behaviour.

What is *London Nights*? We are warned in the *Prologue*; and only the Philistine who misses everything, can miss the meaning:

"We are the puppets of a shadow-play,  
We dream the plot is woven of our hearts,  
Passionately we play the self-same parts  
Our fathers have played passionately yesterday,  
And our sons play tomorrow. There's no speech



In a desire, nor any idle word,  
 Men have not said and women have not  
 heard. . . . .  
 We pass, and have our gesture; love and pain  
 And hope and apprehension and regret  
 Weave ordered lines into a pattern set  
 Not for our pleasure, and for us in vain.  
 The gestures eternal; we who pass  
 Pass on the gesture; we, who pass, pass on  
 One after one into oblivion . . . ."

Well, this gesture is the code of manners which Symons put on. He has the sceptical sympathy of a gentleman, as he tells us in *In the Stalls*; he endeavors after his fashion to imagine how the other half live, and gets as far as the aristocrat usually does in such an attempt, being attracted only by the picturesquely amoral, girls whose lives are in their way, as mannered as his own. He sings of the stage-door, the *Ambassadeurs*, Carbis Bay, and Venetian Nights. He writes as though literature were a kind of eighteenth century grand tour. The very courtesans receive the ironic sympathy of the aloof. Consider *White Heliotrope*:

"The feverish rooms and that white bed,  
 The tumbled skirts upon a chair,  
 The novel flung half-open, where  
 Hat, hair-pins, puffs and paints, are spread;

The mirror that has sucked your face  
 Into its secret deep of deeps,  
 And there mysteriously keeps  
 Forgotten memories of grace;

And you, half dressed and half awake,  
 Your slant eyes strangely watching me,  
 And I, who watch you drowsily,  
 With eyes that, having slept not, ache;

This (need one dread? nay, dare one hope?)  
 Will rise, a ghost of memory, if  
 Ever again my handkerchief  
 Is scented with White Heliotrope."

This is charming, but it is a pattern, a decoration, and, set beside Rossetti's *Jenny*, we note the difference immediately. What the lady would be like in "real life" one may learn, if he cares to, by turning to the prostitute scene in Wells' *New Machiavelli*. Symons' poem has the same oblique relation to life as the epigrams in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. And Symons is "the only genuine and adequate representative" of the English decadence, not because he writes *Bianca* and *Stella Maris* and other poems over which the prurient may snuffle, but because he is the perfect artist.

People are always quoting Poe's dictum about the short story with admiration, but they mysteriously fail to remember that Poe wrote something of the same sort about the lyric poem. The poet, too, must so compose his work that every detail makes for the total unity of impression. What makes *London Nights* matter is precisely that it does not matter; that these light-o'-lovers, these music halls and stage doors and assignations in the rain are literally *composed*, and have no more relation to the real chorus girl and city alley-way than, let us say, the fairyland that Alfred Noyes calls Japan has to the real empire of the Mikado.

Symons without his manner becomes Laurence Hope; and the *Indian Love Songs* are such doubtful poetry that we see clearly why *London Nights* is good. Like Longfellow, Symons is gifted with exquisite literary tact. He seldom commits Swinburne's commonest blunder—that of over-estimating his material. One may say that if Verlaine had never written, Symons would have in-

vented him out of sheer *elan litteraire*. For here are the common decadent themes—the artificial life of slum and tavern and theatre and brothel—themes which excited John Davidson to a kind of reformatory frenzy, but which bring to Symons only a firmer hold on the brush, a more delicate nuance in the music. As pathology Bianca does not in one sense even interest him; he could not have written *Hermaphroditus*. Hence, I say, he has the manners of the fine gentleman—that detachment of the artist which is, fundamentally, his escape from life. Only the highest conviction can save this detachment from the appearance of cold and studied insolence.

“Mere violets of the wood,  
For all their sweetness, have not power to  
move  
The curiosity that rules my blood.”

he writes, but the curiosity is the “idle curiosity” of the artist, not that of a medical practitioner.

No one writes of love and women nowadays as Symons does except perhaps Schnitzler. But the “süßes Madl” of the Viennese doctor is not akin to Symons’ “belle amie.” She has, even through the melancholy of Schnitzler’s prose, a reality, a roundness that links her with the etchings of Zorn or with Chaucer’s Criseyde. Symons’ women are all virginal even in sin. Schnitzler is Strindberg softened by irony, but Symons is Browning and *hauteur*. When Anatol dismisses Elsa or Gabrielle, it is a little comic, a little vulgar, because it is human, all too human, but when Symons takes leave of his Venetian *bella*, we read:

“Life dreams itself; the world goes on  
Oblivious, in oblivion;  
Life dreams itself, content to keep  
Happy immortally, in sleep,”

and the lady is already translated with all things earthly to shadow:

“I have loved, not Love, but a pale,  
Mortal woman, and made  
The whole world for her sake;  
Let the sight of my eyes fall,  
And the whole world fade.  
I have dreamed; let me wake.”

Symons is a composer of poems. In English we commonly connote by the word “poet” an ethical implication, so that Keats, who was anything but a philosopher, must be twisted and squeezed into a system of conduct because he wrote that beauty was truth. Symons is not a poet in this sense, but an artist who uses words as other men use chords or colors. All the seven arts have got into his blood. Sometimes he writes as though he were an impressionist painter as in *Twilight*:

“The pale gray sea crawls stealthily  
Up the pale lilac of the beach;  
A bluer grey, the waters reach  
To where the horizon ends the sea.

Flushed with a tinge of dusky rose,  
The clouds, a twilight lavender,  
Flood the low sky, and duskier  
The mist comes flooding in, and flows

Into the twilight of the land  
And darkness, coming softly down,  
Rustles across the fading sand  
And folds its arms about the town.”

This is landscape, but here is an interior from the opening of *Spain*:

“Josefa, when you sing,



With clapping hands, the sorrows of your  
Spain,  
And all the bright-shawled ring  
Laugh and clap hands again,  
I think how all the sorrows were in vain.

The footlights flicker and spire  
In tongues of flame before your tiny feet,  
My warm-eyed gipsy, higher,  
And in your eyes they meet  
More than their light, more than their golden  
heat.  
You sing of Spain, and all  
Clap hands for Spain and you, and for the  
song;  
One dances, and the hall  
Rings like a beaten gong  
With louder-handed clamours of the throng."

Such things are seen by a painter—  
the "values" of the sea-beach he got  
from the impressionists, and he de-  
scribes the high lights in the picture of  
Josefa precisely as if he were going to  
paint them.

Latterly he has abandoned painting  
for music. Consider, for instance, this  
marvellous lyric in which, as in Mall-  
arme, sound trembles on the verge of  
silence:

"O water, voice of my heart, crying in the  
sand,

All night long crying with a mournful cry,  
As I lie and listen, and cannot understand  
The voice of my heart in my side, or the voice  
of the sea,

O water, crying for rest, is it I, is it I?  
All night long the water is crying to me.

Unresting water, there shall never be rest  
Till the last moon drop and the last tide fail,  
And the fire of the end begin to burn in the  
West;

And the heart shall be weary and wonder and  
cry like the sea,

And life long crying without avail,  
As the water all night long is crying to me."

This is Debussy, and it is also what  
Tennyson tried to write all his life  
without ever quite succeeding. So in  
*Cesare Borgia*, Symons' last book, the  
speeches are not speeches but music,  
music out of Strauss and Ravel and the  
moderns. Who but a musician would  
finger blank verse like this?

"I tell you, Cesare, there's a wind in my heart  
That will not let me rest; there are great wings  
Of birds that beat against the winds; storms  
Everlasting and the unresting waters; loves  
That are more drowsy than the bees at noon  
That have trafficked on the heath and sucked  
the heather:  
And I am all of these and none of these."

*Cesare Borgia* is not a play, but a sym-  
phonic poem. Indeed, Symons is not a  
dramatist, except perhaps here and  
there in his play about Nero in the  
*Tragedies*.

Well, no man can write forever of art  
without having some opinion of the  
world, and the creed of Symons is called  
symbolism. The root of symbolism is a  
sensativeness to Time, which Symons  
shares with Shakespeare. He might in-  
scribe over his poems some couplet from  
the *Sonnets*:

"Like as the waves make towards the pebbled  
shore,

So do our minutes hasten to their end,"

or some large stanza out of Spencer,  
brooding over mutability. Time hap-  
pens to us, and we are helpless. Even  
the artist, who so much resembles God,  
is as helpless as God is to stay the  
eternal flux of visions:

"And the only world is the world of my  
dreams,

And my weaving the only happiness;  
 For what is the world but what it seems?  
 And who knows but that God, beyond our  
   guess,  
 Sits weaving worlds out of loneliness."

Mr. More—I can not get away from  
 the amazing Mr. More—says that this  
 is all wrong, that this is not the true  
 Nirvana. Somehow I recall *The Temp-  
 est*:

"the baseless fabric of this vision,  
 The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve  
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
 Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
 As dreams are made on, and our little life  
 Is rounded with a sleep."

It is better for poetry, at least, that  
 Symons prefers being wrong with  
 Shakespeare to being right with Mr.  
 More. As to whether Symons believes  
 in illusion or disillusion or not I do not  
 know, but he believes in art. This, I  
 take it, is what *Faustus and Helen*  
 means. When Helen says:

"My beauty has been dust so many years

I know not how the memory of it lasts  
 Among men's minds so long....

The one good thing  
 Is life, for there is nothing in the grace:  
 I have been dead, and there is nothing there."

she is answered, not by Faustus, but by  
 Symons himself in *Credo*:

"Each, in himself, his hour to be and cease  
 Endures alone, but who of men shall dare,  
 Sole with himself, his single burden bear,  
 All the long day until the night's release?  
 Yet ere night falls, and the last shadows close,  
 This labour of himself is each man's lot;  
 All he has gained of earth shall be forgot,  
 Himself he leaves behind him when he goes.  
 If he has any valiancy within,  
 If he has made his life his very own,  
 If he has loved or laboured, and has known  
 A strenuous virtue, or a strenuous sin;  
 Then, being dead, his life was not all vain,  
 For he has saved what most desire to lose,  
 And he has chosen what the few must choose,  
 Since life, once lived, shall not return again.  
 For of our time we lose so large a part  
 In serious trifles, and so oft let slip  
 The wine of every moment, at the lip  
 Its moment, and the moment of the heart.  
 We are awake so little on the earth,  
 And we shall sleep so long, and rise so late,  
 If there is any knocking at that gate  
 Which is the gate of death, the gate of birth."



## Culture

BY HELENE MULLINS.

I have heard too many  
 Well-sounding phrases  
 Your simple words,  
 Though they be of truth,  
 Affect me not.



# "Serious" Uses of the American Language

BY JOHN VAN ALSTYNE WEAVER.

WHEN my book of verses, "In American," first appeared, several critics were querulous concerning the statement on the jacket that "here is the first use of the vernacular for serious literature."

I have always wished to explain just what that statement of the publisher meant. My attention has been called to "The Bigelow Papers," with the question as to whether that was not a use for serious literature, and also to the poems of Carl Sandburg and of Vachel Lindsay, who, some months before the publication of my book, published "The Golden Whales of California," with the subtitle, "And Other Verses in the American Language."

First, as to the application of the word, "serious." What the publisher meant to underline was the fact that where Ring W. Lardner and his imitators, H. C. Witwer and Ed Streeter, had used the lingo with complete effectiveness, their point of view was either frankly comic or satiric. Before them, Artemus Ward, Josh Billings and Petroleum V. Nasby, to name the headliners of a whole burlesque school, used a hick dialect for very broad satire. But none of these ever pretended that their stuff was seriously intended.

Bret Harte, it is true, used a combination of farmer and miner dialects, but only in a few isolated cases was the intention other than satiric. Eugene Field had at his command a very good

Rube vocabulary, but it verged more upon the profane than the inspirational. James Whitcomb Riley, I will grant, may have intended to write literature when he produced such native sketches as "Seein' Things at Night," and "When the Frost is on the Pumpkin"; but no one today, I believe, mistakes his productions for anything but somewhat shallow, fairly easy tear-jerkers, a trifle above such ballads as "Silver Threads Among the Gold." City talk was used with excellent results by (I think it was) Will Irwin, in "Love Sonnets of a Hoodlum," and "Love Sonnets of a Stenographer." But those were *tours de force*; and I feel sure that no real effort was made to reflect the American people, their lives and their thoughts, in those verses..

Now, as to "The Bigelow Papers," Lowell had an intensely serious purpose in writing them. That purpose was not, however, to give a picture of America—it was not literary, even. He had a lesson to drive home. Each of those verses is a sermon or a strong editorial—on the Mexican war at first, later on Abolition. He wanted to drive home his points, he wanted to spread his propaganda, and he figured that putting his utterances into the mouth of a farmer was the most effective method. If he could better have accomplished his job by writing in Hindustani or in Polish, he would have done so. The language was merely a means to an end.

And the dialect he used was a specialized, farmer-dialect, incomprehensible, I'll wager, to most of the city-folk of that day.

What I was attempting to do is summed up very briefly: I wanted to show in the American language how the great illiterate majority of the American people—and the majority is illiterate, as H. L. Mencken has clearly demonstrated, and as you will easily discover for yourself if you listen in on any conversation where the mob is foregathered—thinks, acts, and dreams. That is the most important word, *dreams*. For it is only in the ambitions, the hopes and the visions of a people that they are worth literary consideration. True enough, most of them are so inarticulate that the dreams have to be surmised. But I was bent upon showing, if they could become articulate, in what manner they would do so. Mr. Mencken, by his great book, "The American Language," had broken the ground by demonstrating that there is, in this country, a clearly-defined language, absolutely distinct from English, following regular rules, and common to the entire country. Have you ever considered that there are over fifty distinct dialects within the realms of Great Britain, and that natives, say of Yorkshire, have great difficulty in conversing with say the Welsh? And yet any native of Florida can talk with one from Maine and one from California, as army life illustrated, and, except for an occasional localism, all three "get" everything that is said. This language, while it is always comprehensible to the commoners, is not always so to those who

speak literary English; and it is, on the other hand, somewhat difficult for a teamster, for instance, to take in the statements of a college professor. The languages are separate—and the majority speaks American.

Now, omitting entirely any discussion of my own experiments, there are three men who come to mind at once as conscious users of American. In verse, the two I have already mentioned, Lindsay and Sandburg. In prose, Eugene G. O'Neill.

O'Neill, from his earliest plays, has used the vernacular, and used it with an ease and an insight that shows his continuous recognition of it as the every-day speech of our natives. The two most conspicuous examples are in "Beyond the Horizon", where it is more the farmer-sailor type than the general, and in "Diff'rent". The speeches of the good-for-nothing soldier-villain in the latter piece are marvels of accuracy and characterization. There is, of course, some specialized slang, principally army talk; but as a whole the speeches are comprehensible to anyone, and will not, I feel sure, lose force or meaning as time shifts the vocabulary; for he has plucked phrases from the universal American. ("The Emperor Jones," is of course, negro dialect.)

With Sandburg, we have a different proposition. Here is a man who knows the lingo as well as any in the country. But he has never been content to "go the whole hog." He mixes isolated American words and phrases in with literary English. He will often juxtapose a polysyllable and some Americanism such as "galoot" or "jazz". If he



were anything but the supreme artist that he is, the effect might sometimes be ludicrous. But, by some magic of his own, he never fails of his effect. How he does it, I can't understand; perhaps it is because of his unbelievable knowledge of the people he writes about, of life in general, and of the human heart. And he is so sincere, so overwhelmingly sincere. His use of American is unique; he can do without it, but it adds a tang, a force, a vividness.

When we come to Lindsay, we see a writer who frankly uses American only to get a clever effect. Except in "Bryan, Bryan, Bryan," I cannot see that it is much help to him. I will except also a few passages in "The Golden Whales." He does not really understand American, I am sure. He knows some of the jargon—principally small-town and Chautauqua—but of the underlying principles of the language, its quaint quirks and its essential differences from English, I am convinced he knows nothing. Also, I do not think he knows much about the people who speak it—Springfielders and farmers, perhaps he knows, but not the inhabitants of cities, at any rate. He has no need for American, anyway. His poems are poems per se. The exquisite "I Hear These Things When Gipsy Fiddles Cry" and the profound "Johnny Appleseed," to mention two of his latest, are pieces of literary English. And when he says "Other poems in the American language," he

means, "Poems with a few American words in them."

Robert Frost, who shares with Sandburg and E. A. Robinson the distinction of being held by many critics at the head of American poetry, uses American naturally and beautifully where he wishes so to do. It is not the illiterate, the essential American, but a very legitimate sub-dialect,—half-cultivated New England farmer-speech.

We in the United States have a lingo, an offspring of English as the Irish lingo used by Synge and Lady Gregory is an offspring, and as organized and definite as the Irish is. When the Abbey Theatre group use Irish, they do not take any half-way measures; they do not mix in Irishisms and Anglicisms; their speeches are true transcriptions.

And the other night, when I heard the lyric phrases, the rich, imagery-evoking, arresting sentences of "The Playboy of the Western World" coming over the footlights, I breathed a silent prayer that some persons would come forward in the near future to do effectually what I only experimented with—to take this strong, racy, eloquent American of ours, and do for it what Synge did for the Irish.

The American people, their customs, their thoughts, their dreams, shown forth in their own language—that's what I hope to see as the backbone of the coming American literature.

# Transfiguration

BY ROBARD EMMET UA CINNEIDIG.

When you had gone  
And the house was locked,  
I said:

“Let me turn my thoughts to God.  
The night is my own;  
I will read and pray.”

I opened the Bible  
You left behind,  
And turned to the gospel of Luke  
And read  
Of the woman  
Who came where the Saviour sat  
And washed His feet  
With a flood of tears:

“‘And turning to Simon  
Jesus said:  
Wherefore I say to thee,  
Many sins are forgiven her  
Because she hath loved much.’”

And as I was reading  
I heard a voice  
Speaking the words,  
And I turned and looked,  
And the Saviour was there,  
Standing before me in the room.

But I was not afraid,  
For the voice I heard  
And the face I saw,  
And the look of love in the eyes  
Were yours.



# Smoke

BY LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL.

“AND, oh yes, Gloria wired about getting a ring,” Septimus said in his quiet, slow way.

The chauffeur had drawn the car up, painstakingly, in the snow, so that it was diagonal to the building, at the end of the driveway in front of the building, so that Septimus and Joan, wrapped in their robes, shivering just a little, could see when the other machine drove up, the undertaker’s machine. Septimus had gone in for a moment, but came out saying it was warmer outside. They talked calmly, easily, quietly. Everything had been said, about the last days, about all the plans they knew. They felt able to go through with this last rite, though they did not know what was ahead, what that grey building held. Emery was with them as much as he had ever been—a pervading presence, interested, understanding, amused, distressed that they should be distressed, his mind going on, as always...on beyond theirs, but coming back for theirs, and back, and back.

“...about getting a ring,” Septimus was suddenly saying, as quietly, as almost absently, as he had said all the other things. And all the emotion which was smoothed down inside, held as easily as if in one gloved hand, slipped in a second, ruffled, rose. She had wanted to see the ring again. Now she would see it again. But the mention of it was like slipping a key, suddenly, easily, but unexpectedly, into a lock. Tears came,

and it was hard to speak. Septimus didn’t remember the ring. She told him what it was like, as if it were very important. The ring was he himself to her...it brought his hands, and his hands were himself...his gestures... They talked of his hands a little. She told him that the last movements he made, with his left hand only, were natural, as he always gestured more with his left hand. She showed Septimus the gestures. He was pleased at the niceness of even this tiny point. But, of course, it wasn’t tiny.

...A girl in a garishly bright cerise corduroy coat walked up the long sidewalk, looked around a little, and then went into the great dark-grey stone building. Why that touch?...

Then the other machine came, driving carefully, the hood back, two caskets, one black cloth, the other brown wood, held in the back. She and Septimus got out, and went into the dark, dark, bare, cold stone hall.

“The black one is Emery’s,” Septimus said.

They stood while it was brought in. It was placed on a wheeled stretcher. “Will you follow?” the man who belonged in the building said. One of the undertaker’s men went with him. They walked behind, slowly, just around a corner, and into an oblong room. As they went an organ—some kind of a tin, artificial, mechanical organ—began to play, very slowly, “Nearer, my God,

to Thee, nearer to Thee." In the middle of the oblong room, which was something like a little, make-believe chapel, with organ-pipes at one end and three or four rows of benches at the other, was an oblong space, roped off with black, and with a black canopy over it. Into this space the casket was wheeled. Septimus and Joan stood quiet, still, almost rigid, by the side. The horror of all this demanded utter quietude, calmness, indifference, and a grasping firmly of things. All this had nothing to do with Emery. He was there with them, looking on, seeing it as comic and horrible, undisturbed, reassuring. Joan was sure of Septimus, sure that he knew all she knew. . . .knew it even more easily and naturally, less rigidly than she. He felt the horror less, the humor more. Emery did not need to reassure him—he and Emery were smiling together, very delight in Emery's face, contentment and contemplation in Septimus's.

Then, slowly, slowly, the worst thing happened. The black canopy, and the casket, began to lower, lower, lower. The canopy lowered until it reached the floor, and on the top of the canopy was—the semblance of a newly-covered grave—something which looked like brown earth, something spread over it which looked like palm-leaves. The men went out, and for a moment they were alone.

This was the most comic thing she had ever seen. Unbelief had run its course. . . .there was no further to go in unbelief. They came with certainty and grief, and humor, and beauty in their hearts. . . .and they were given a tin organ, a make-believe grave, for their assurance, to make it all seem ha-

bitual, decent, comforting, to them. These people did not know that the burning of the body, its going in smoke, was the most beautiful thing they could suppose. . . .they had no idea but that the old way was really the best and that a pretense of keeping it up would be the only consolation. To have a grave dragged in! To have this make-believe grave there on the floor!

"Thank Heaven we were here, to bring some thoughts here, some ideas, to see how it is, as Emery would see it," Joan said.

"Yes. . . .we two," said Septimus.

The men came back and spoke quietly with Septimus. He was to go down and identify the body.

"Will you stay here?" he asked Joan, with the same quietness.

"I will come with you," she said. It seemed to be the greatest decision she had ever made. But she knew that she would rather look again at Emery, if anyone was going to, than anything else. She was not afraid.

Then Septimus said it would be better not. . . .in words she did not notice or remember. Gloria had asked especially that nobody see him (Gloria had asked. . . .!) He was very changed. It would be better not.

"Of course. I will not go if she did not want anyone to," she said, and put her head up. And Septimus went, with one of the men.

"You stay here with the lady," the man called back to another man. And together, in the dark, damp, icy-cold stone hall, they stood, while Septimus was looking for the last time at Emery, a thing she could not do. Reaction from the tension set in. She wanted to cry.



She cried a little without showing it. Septimus came up, and the man asked them pleasantly if they didn't want to wait in the office, and motioned to the room at the other end of the front of the building, where a long table and chairs were. They went in there. Joan sat down at the end of the table, her back to the front, Septimus at one side, near her. Then she cried. She put her face in her hands and shook with perfectly silent sobs. She loosened her veil and put it up. Then she stopped sobbing, got up blindly, and walked to the window at the back. She did not realize then what she would see from that window. But when she got there, she saw the low, one-story part of the building in which the cremating was done. Deep, white snow lay all around. A tall, slim, dark chimney went up.

"Septimus, come and look at the sun," she said suddenly. He came, and looked. It was a ball of fire, red through a kind of haze, red-fire and round through the greyness of the day—a greyness which seemed to be partly made by the snow, reflected up. It seemed a painted day, a painted sun, a type, not a reality, unique. The sun was close at the left of the black, thin chimney, and low down. It almost touched the chimney.

Suddenly, as they looked, and before they had gotten to expecting it, or realizing what would happen, smoke was coming out of the chimney, softly, slowly, at first, then more thick. Inadvertently they had come upon the heart of their adventure, on its beauty, on what was real. The men had not known that this was the beautiful thing. They thought a false grave made on the floor would comfort, would seem real to them.

They themselves, instinctively, had come to this window. This was what the rites should be...some lovely window from which one could look and watch the smoke go up! For a long, long time the smoke went up, filled with delicate colors some of the time, sometimes black, but always gentle, steady, and always blowing to the East. They talked a little, spoke a little to each other, or to themselves, which was the same, as they watched. They spoke of the beauty of it, the symbolism, of how Emery would see more in it than they, and of how the sunset always symbolized the going soul. While they watched, the undertaker's man came in, with Emery's ring, and asked Septimus to sign a receipt for it. When he had gone Septimus put it into Joan's hand, and she held it close in her hands, and to her breast, close to her. It meant Emery to her. This inexpressible heart of things...that they two should stand and watch the smoke and think his thoughts and feel him near, and that his ring should be pressed in her hands, where he would have wanted it to be. He was content, fulfilled, mature. Unbelief was far, far, left behind, now. The timelessness which only Emery could invoke was all about them. This was the kind of thing which one would dream, would say softly as being ideal, knowing very well it could not come to pass.

"When I die," someone might say, "I want the two dearest people in the world to me...the dearest man...the dearest woman...to take my body to some wintry place at sunset, with the sun red above the snow, and watch the smoke, which will be like my soul, rising from

a tall, slim chimney, to the sky, and going always to the East. And one of those two shall hold closely to her, for my comfort and for hers, the ring I wear... while my soul goes. And I will be there with them while it goes."

And this was what did happen.

And when the smoke grew thin and thin, and stopped, three birds flew straight across where it had been, two together, and then one a little way behind, flying North, which for a bird means that the Spring is near.

They went then to see the front windows of the room, whose panes were diamond-shaped. They stood there, talking a little, looking out at the waste of snow, dotted with sweeping, hanging, fringing evergreens all through the great front yard, and waiting for the ashes to be brought to them. Joan traced lines in the dusty diamonds with her gloved fore-finger.

"Emery would find some meaning in that which you just made," Septimus said, watching her. "You made a cross in a diamond."

"I didn't know what I made," she said, "but I knew he would think it was something." And they looked at each other and smiled, in a great happiness, in a great secret which they had between them.

They talked of many things, about Emery.

"I wish you could keep the ring," said Septimus, earnestly, simply, wistfully.

They waited a long time. The man in the little front office next to this was fat, and light-haired. He kept saying it wouldn't be long now. He talked over

the telephone a little, flippantly, flirtatiously. His hair was really almost red, under the electricity.

Then the other man came, bringing the ashes in a small, round, bronze-colored metal box. The red-haired man lifted the lid for them to see.

"Just bone, lime-bone," he said, and they looked at the white bits of bone-substance which half-filled the round jar. Then he sealed it, with many accurate, habitual movements, and asked Septimus to sign a paper. He had scissors, pincers, paste, twine, everything ready, in his desk. What a strange responsibility,—tying up lime-bone in boxes. What fussy detail of paraphernalia for its accomplishment! He wrapped the box in paper and handed it to Septimus. Septimus handed it immediately to Joan, and she took it and held it with one hand in the curve of the other arm...the left arm. It was still warm. Unbelief... At first she thought she did not want to take it, but she felt a strength of bravery not usual. Of course she would take it. And then she was glad. This was what he would want. All the way into the city, over the rough, snowy roads, almost impassable, the car lurching, the steady chauffeur guiding it well, over the ferry, with workmen getting home from work, she carried it, the cooling box, close to her, now in her right arm, and the ring in her hand. They talked a little, intermittently. Septimus dropped her at a corner, to take the elevated. She gave him the ring and the box, whose string was coming a little untied. She held the ring close in both hands before she let it go.



Then... "Here's the ring," she said, quite evenly. And he took it.

She climbed the El steps and bought her ticket and went out through the door, past the chopper's box and onto the platform, and waited with the other people waiting there. Life was going on...had been going on all this afternoon. Now she was back. She looked the same. They did not know. Nobody would know. All she wanted was to get home, to Hilda...perhaps they could have dinner there together, quietly, and she could tell her how it was.

When she got almost up the third flight the door opened, and she could see that Freddie and Frances were there, and Hilda was in her brown dress, and was going out with them for dinner. Hilda looked desperate. There was nothing to do about it. It was hard to

go in. Her throat began to get ready to force her voice out as if naturally. It was as if she had to wedge through something, push her way in. There were two textures, two densities of atmosphere, the thin one from which she had come, the thick one of these rooms where they were sitting, idly, usually, their faces turned toward the door where she would come in.

When they had gone, she was too tired to eat. Although he had been there with them, she wanted to sit down and write him just how it had been. There were several things especially she wanted to remember for him, as she went slowly to sleep...the round sun by the tall chimney, the crosses which Septimus had said she made in diamonds, birds flying, and straight-blown smoke.



## Gothic

BY JEAN STARR UNTERMEYER.

Think not, my dearest, though I love to speak  
 With windy pride about the rock I use  
 To build with—oh think not I would refuse  
 The gargoyles of your fancy. Every bleak  
 Cornice and every archway I now seek  
 To have them softened with your arabesques,  
 Your graceful, happy scrollery on desks,  
 On altars, lecterns, niches and on pews.

Though I may labor with a fervour that  
 Is mediaeval in its piety,  
 Completion finds my temples gaunt and flat;  
 Cold and erect. But in satiety  
 Of sternness, I must turn to you, I find,  
 To ornament the Gothic of my mind.

# We Are Gathered at the Fountain

BY STEPHEN TA VAN.

“WELL, there seems to be no question about it,” said my friend George Greggsmith, raising meditatively his noggin of my whiskey. “This secrecy-stuff has come to stay. This pussy-footed business, I mean, this sneaking rotten rum over the transom and swigging it on the sly. The will of the Great Amurrican Peepul has spoken, through legal interpreters, and we are the goats.”

“If you mean what you have in your hand,” said I, “when you say rotten rum, I think you show very poor taste. That stood me eighty-five the case and is quite high-class Scotch, so far as I know.”

“So far as you know,” George repeated derisively. “Well, what *do* you know? Your day of joy is over. Forty years old, with a bum digestion, what do *you* care about good liquor? You’re too long out of practice to be accurate, and anyway, you drank so much in the old days that your taste got flatted. . . . “Not,” he continued, switching back aggrievedly, “that I give a hoot for liquor myself—I can take it or let it alone—but I think Prohigh is damned bad for the community morals.”

“Perhaps,” I suggested, “you are about to speak on the subject of personal privilege.”

But George is not an utter fool.

“No matter about personal privilege,” he said in effect. “What I mean to say is that the loss of our liquor threatens

to turn us into a nation of slush sots. Deprived of our immemorial privilege of getting a real edge in that palladium of our liberties, the neighborhood groggery, we gather at the soda fountain and swig adulterated syrup. The instinct of the herd forces it to titivate its collective stomach gregariously, and with rum gone, what is left for a sop to its bovine yearning? Answer: A horrid volume of liquid and semi-liquid slops, masquerading as refreshment.

“At every corner and in between you see them, the slopsters,” he went on bitterly, “strung out along the bar without even a brass rail to give them self-respect. They don’t look happy, they can’t possibly *be* happy; they are just bogging down their insides for the coroner, without the satisfaction of a jag. Dope? If you tell me they get dope, I shall say: ‘What is that to me?’ I am not interested in the conventional standard. Personally I have more respect for the man who goes to a counter for a shot of hop than for the one who eats a sundae—he’s getting something and the other isn’t. But let that pass. What I object to is the asininity of the whole proceeding: burdening expensively the internals of a nation, *sans* exhilaration; on the contrary, with a gloom.”

He drained my whiskey and departed shortly thereafter, fuming.

When next I saw him it was through the open window of an ice cream par-



lor. He sat at a small triangular table with his two one-quarter-grown nieces, absorbing a product of the place. In fact, my startled glance caught him with the familiar dazed look in his eyes and the business end of a long-handled spoon in his mouth.

"Aha, renegade!" I cried. "How thou hast fallen, Lucifer, Lucifer, son of the morning!"

"Come in," he called sheepishly. "Cease bawling, and have a root sundae with enameline embroidery."

"Noa, noa."

"A Queen's Delight of addled cream, upholstered in pickled plush!"

"Et tu, Brute."

"A candied pig's foot, lemon-verbena flavored and sprinkled with chloride of lime."

"Get thee behind."

"A bluphpah—the Turkish sweetmeat. It maddens one—makes you see blood spouting from the trees."

Indeed, there was a kind of heavy madness in his manner. I felt it communicate itself to me, almost I was yielding; but just at that point the little red-haired niece was seized by a spasm of choking which required avuncular attention; George took his basilisk eye from mine, and I escaped.

Yet but two evenings later, I awoke temporarily from the trance characteristic of the disease, to find myself in that self-same parlor with a perfectly respectable lady, munching an acorn sundae with linseed dressing and cochineal!

It is insidious, the soft-drink lure. Our liquor has been taken from us, and as George said, it seems essential to our national peace to fill our tummies with

something not quite food. Throughout the land the rummery has yielded to the sloppery. We sap up some sweetish fluid to begin the day; eat gelid mush for lunch; and when night falls must solace our weariness determinedly, if in the open, with a frosted combination.

At the baseball game we soak each other's trouser-knees with drippings from innumerable cones and bottles passed from hand to hand. I have not visited a classic football fight for years, but the mind trembles and the spirit shudders at thought of the replacement, in the grim biting air above those hard November gridirons, of the generous warming flask by a dish of orange ice... Ah, what tender memories of Princeton and dear, awful old New Haven the connotation doth dislodge! And eke of a tumultuous Cambridge game, whereat we had too many tasks, and from the ensuing party three divorces resulted directly, and a fourth quarrel was patched up with difficulty, Jim Perkins having scratched his wife's arm on the way home.

Today, if one desire to entertain a lady, he may feed her; but beyond that, there is slight opportunity for the suave, time-honored query:

"You never by any chance indulge in any stronger drink than water, do you, dear?"

One can only invite her to a sloppery, and there, over a table coldly reminiscent of the last previous prohigh debauch, urge her to select without stint from a bill suggesting nothing more vividly than a list of the worst perfumes. How to work up steam for convincing social argument in such conditions, may be called, unexaggeratedly, a problem.

Nor is the more elaborate hostelry of the present helpful. Hotel provender has not improved conspicuously since the banishment of rum, and gone are those deferential yet subtly congenial waiter-like persons, who accelerated by imperceptible degrees an evening's gaiety, giving deftly to the conviviality a tone daring yet confidentially home-like.

Yes, gone are Jacques and Henri and Maurice—or discouraged—mostly; and gone are the dear, delightful occasions over which they presided inconspicuously. I am aware that the change is for the better—that ice cream, with maple syrup, is fundamentally more conducive to the system's health than bacardi or sloe gin. The corner grogshop had to go. But why must they destroy all, *all* the pretty and forthputting, if at times a trifle rakish inns, or turn them into creameries? And let me submit in passing, Reader, that when quantity is taken into consideration, the corner saloon itself was not more deleterious than is the creamery. Can you seriously believe that twenty nut sun-daes, for example, produce a morning-feeling less all-gone than an equal number of (say) gin fizzes?

It may be, of course, that I am unreasonably prejudiced in the old inn's favor—in the first place, by the enchantment of distance and disuse. George Greggsmith spoke to me in part the truth: I am indeed fortyish, and off liquor for life. But the age brings its compensations and the indisposition is mental, not physical. Life amuses me in a manner more clean-cut, now, when I am sober. As to George's slur at my digestion, it is base slander. I can at

will eat lobster, cucumbers and a double biscuit tortoni, with any man. I do admit, however, the romantic potency of intervening space, and doubtless I euphueize a trifle, when the discussion is of battles long ago, as any oldster views his early escapades through a mellow glow.

Secondly, I may have been unusually lucky in my inns. I am by experience unable to observe the inn as presented on the stage, or to listen to a preacher damn it from the platform, without chuckling. Foul dens there have been—and still are and always will be—if one hunt for them or wander blindly; but there were also pleasant coigns, maintained for the relief of care and advancement of friendship, which have fought in vain to survive without degeneration the ice cream slide.

There is for instance a spot at the head of a long, narrow New England lake, where, taking advantage of a slight outjutting, an errant genius of entertainment set up a refuge in the rustic style. The buildings were simple; a large cabin, with wide verandas over the lake; and several smaller ones for sleeping quarters, if you stayed. The proprietor kept beagles and game chickens. He was rumored to be involved in counterfeiting and to operate the hostelry and his fancying as smoke-screens. The tale added an agreeable spice of wickedness without real danger.

Steep, wooded hills arose on both sides to receive you as you entered the lake's valley from the South. It was usually early evening, the wonderful New England gloaming, when the sun has sunk but its influence is still felt,



and through the magical twilight air the country sounds are intensified. You came up over the little wooden bridges across the narrow brooks, along a winding road between stone fences, until, where the lake deepened, the hills drew closer to the water and took you beneath their shadow of oak and walnut and spruce, with here and there a white birch and a grim group of stone pines.

There the road became difficult; two cars could hardly pass and to meet a load of hay meant a campaign. If you were ferrying a party, you were a busy citizen for a half-mile before the way widened suddenly at the inn, for no one but the driver watched, and a little carelessness anent the ruts was likely to lose Mary for you into the lake on one side, or scrape off Jillson's head against the trunk of a pine on the other.

At the inn, uproar ensued. Personal supervision of the proprietor was required for the preparation of drinks and the steak or chicken dinner; his bland, blonde mistress was requisitioned to regulate the mechanical music; and Louis the head waiter, who was also bus boy and man of all work, was set scampering to clear the floor and join half a dozen small tables to form a long one. A couple sought the canoes for an ante-dinner paddle, another went to the kennels to inspect the beagles, a third danced, and the remaining quartet settled beside a table on the east veranda to commence the main diversion of the evening.

Ah, gels of those halcyon days, Ulleeze and Ustelle, brown-eyed sisters with pulled-molasses hair, light of foot and in temperament laughter-loving, with odd streaks of gloom in part self-

dramatized; out of my petty segment of the Dream, now for the moment separate from yours, I pour to you libation—not in chocolateade! Your Grandma hated me, while you yourselves distinguished me but slightly if at all from the continuous procession of young men, and soon became to me merely two in the company of sheepfaces. Yet we had gorgeous times together at the lake's head, and without conscious sentimentality I like once in a blue moon to think of you: of Ustelle, in one of her sullen moods, conversing fluently of suicide, then brisking up to imitate with gusto a quarrel-scene by her hated Cousin Bruce and his actress-inamorata; of Ulleeze, possessor of the inimitably graceful legs, dancing upon the tabletop, to our delight and the confusion of sundry straight-laced guests who had appeared by accident.

Always I remember her—Ulleeze—most pleasurably as dancing; and she could not have trod those wild or languorous measures so gloriously on sun-daes. There is to me, about the dancing of the prohigh gels today, a kind of heavy, calculated vampishness, a pawn-broking undisguised—perchance I tread on ground too dangerous.

Ustelle is dead. She died (as you may guess) not by her own hand but by disease. Pneumonia caught her after the exposure of a college prom, and like a horseman carried her away. Her sister, shaken by terror of sudden death, pondered convent protection, but married a Philadelphian instead. I suppose Ulleeze is matronly now; but character does not change and were it not for the previously-acknowledged, deadly insidiousness of the stuff, I could

not imagine her, even corpulent and with offspring in tow, as guzzling Nut Strawberry Perfection in a sloppery. . . She was so tactful, so discerning, on the way home! How agreeably she clung, when through the midnight darkness of the woods the yells of an escaped maniac from the state asylum resounded eerily—an incident, by the way, to which a well-known literary efficiency critic objected, on the grounds of improbability, when I attempted to introduce it to current fiction.

Not long ago chance took me, on a trip with friends, into the motor-neighborhood of that inn. A heavy thunderstorm was coming up, I remembered the hostelry by the lake, and we sought shelter.

The scene, dark in the weird pause before the falling of the shower, lay lovely as ever, but the inn grounds were dishevelled. No sound of beagles issued from the kennels, the weeds grew shoulder-high within the poultry-runs, half-open doors sagged from the hinges of the little cabins, and the main building had the general unkempt look of the deserted.

Our approach roused action, however, in the person of the proprietor, Higgins, who shuffled out lukewarmly, wearing slippers and a shifty eye. Aforetime, he had affected riding-boots and met all comers with bravado.

"Hullo, Higgins," I called. "Don't you know me? I used to come here often enough."

"Kek, kek," he coughed. "Yeh, I remember ye. Put yer car under the shed if ye like, 'n come in. Can't give ye no dinner, though—chef left Thursday, kek, kek."

"Then you're still running?"

"Been tryin' to, kek, kek. They got me pretty strong, three-four times. Cost me more'n I had to buy 'em off, kek, kek. Can't sell ye nothin' now. Ab-so-lute-ly drumtight."

After a little thawing this decision melted and he offered us green whiskey, costly at any price. It developed that he had a precarious trade in the poison, under semi-protection from rural politicians who found his place useful. He did not expect to keep it up much longer. Harried by the authorities and reformers, he had been driven to unwise risks, several objectionable incidents had happened, the house had got a bad name. At any moment he was likely to be shaken down, and soon or late they would get him on a count for which they could lock him up.

"Ye can't make it pay without a license, kek, kek," he coughed drearily. "Folks won't come."

Bully for folks, shout I. The idea that excitement is necessary as a safety-valve, to work off the sorrow of life, is pure bunk. And supposing the existence of license, is it not far more virtuous—and less expensive, save in doctors' bills—to stop at the corner half a dozen times a day and suck in quince pomade with jellied duberries, than to dash madly off into the country and eat a chicken dinner with gin rickey accompaniment, under the disintegrating influence of the wicked hills and lake, and dance, and paddle, and disturb the peace of nature by lovemaking in the open? There is an obvious restraint behind screened doors, and under fly-specked ceilings, a weight toward right-

eousness in the various conglomerations of ice cream. In that environment, and with such pabulum, no man can retain enough ambition to commit honest crime—unless, like George Greggsmith and me, he has at last been hounded by the sheer dank tang of countless chilly doses, to the border of desperate insanity.

For we have now—Georges et moi—despite oft-taken resolutions and occasional spurts of resistance, reached a semi-final stage. Haggard, bloated, with deadened eyes yet well-nigh sleepless, we charge upon the ice-packed counter every hour, or, endeavoring with

pitiful effort to steer a slanting course past the inveigling door, are drawn within, paralyzed, as though by a gigantic invisible hand.

Facing the scornful, pimply clerk, with black-rimmed finger-nails, behind the pseudo-bar, we murmur in dull unison:

“One clubhouse peanut cream, turned, with a dash of assafoetida meringue on the bottom side and two spoons,” and then, “Two charmeuse sundaes, oyster motif, whipped.”

After that, we are ready to sally forth and crack a policeman’s toes, to hear them pop.



## A Bleak Day

BY OSCAR WILLIAMS.

Grey was the wind, and bleak the day,  
 And One there was who talked to me;  
 I cannot tell in words what he  
 Took not a single word to say.

I only know that, strange and dim,  
 His voice was sorrow in my brain,  
 And in the twilight of the rain,  
 Beyond belief, I cried to him.

The rain was hovering in the skies,  
 The hills were uttering his name,—  
 I know that night the darkness came  
 Silent, with meaning in his eyes.



# Little Tales of Mexico

## No. 2. *How Rafael Carried His Head*

BY VINCENT STARRETT.

**T**WENTY years of abnormal peace having dragged themselves away, normal conditions were resumed with gay abandon in the City of Mexico. Machine guns, placed at the heads and intersections of important thoroughfares, swept the streets with destructive impartiality. Untidy heaps of dead had collected in exposed places, and individual corpses leered grotesquely from curious nooks wherein vagrant bullets miraculously had strayed. It seemed that the dead were playing peek-a-boo from behind the stone pillars and in the embrasures of adjoining buildings.

Rodin's exquisite marbles over the grand doorway of the *Teatro Nacional*, withstood the storm. On either side of those heroic figures the walls were pocked and scarred, but these stood forth unscathed and eloquent, a triumph of Art over the follies of little men. A dead Indian lolled on the wide steps beneath; he seemed to be basking in the yellow sunlight that poured in a rich glow over the ornate palace. His eyes stared solemnly out into the white street, as if he were pondering the unaccustomed experience of being dead.

The rattle and hum of General Huerta's light artillery was so constant that, had it suddenly ceased, a great silence would have seemed to have fallen over the world. It did not cease. Instead, save for a few hours at night, it backgrounded the infantry volleys and the shouting of confused combatants,

with steady continuity. This had been going on for two days.

Over the sinister cacaphony, and the sheets of leaden, horizontal hail, flapped the *zopilotes*, the black scavengers of Mexico, awaiting the feast of darkness. O, sacred birds of mystery! worshipped by Aztecs of old, there is today no mystery about your funereal mission in Mexico.

Rafael Hernandez zigzagged carefully along the sidewalk of the *Avenida Cinco de Mayo*, slipping from pillar to doorway and from doorway to post, with the exaggerated caution of a Mexican Indian who values the top of his head. Ordinarily, Rafael was a listless enough *mesero* in a sufficiently unsavory eating-house; but on this day his agility was extraordinary. He would have preferred to have stayed at home, lying flat upon the hot roof of his dwelling, a position slightly above machinegun trajectory; but his weekly wage would cease were the truancy to become known . . . Vaguely, it occurred to him that the curious system of keeping open shop throughout the storming of a city was illogical, but he reflected that everyone was doing it, albeit behind closed shutters—save, indeed, for those merchants directly in the line of gunfire, most of whom were dead, and those who could not by any chance hope for patronage until quiet should have been restored. But a restaurant is an important establishment;

and, after all, noncombatants had been promised every courtesy.

Rafael paused to cross himself at sight of a huddled Indian, who crouched directly beneath a mirror of imposing dimensions, on the corner of a retail clothing emporium. The Indian's back was against a stone support, bracing a corner of the *portales*, and he seemed to be looking into the glass. He was quite dead. The mirror, shattered by stray bullets, reflected the twisted smile of the dead man in a dozen hideous distortions . . . The *mesero* shuddered and passed on, dashing frantically across an intervening thoroughfare to resume his slinking, oblique gait on the farther side . . . At length, the doorway of his own shop took him.

The gunfire gradually moved forward, rested for a time in the immediate neighborhood of the restaurant, which rejoiced in the name of *El Globo*, and pushed further into the city. In the breathing space, a colonel of the Madero forces clattered into the café, and bolted as much food as he could conveniently hold. He told a brave tale, but his appearance belied his heroic observations; he was haggard and alone.

"You are quite safe," he asserted, in payment for his meal. "We are pushing forward in force. By nightfall we shall have them clear of the city. Our second army is closing in from the North, and they will be trapped between our fires. Keep your heads, my friends, all will yet be well!"

A burst of firing from a new quarter startled him, and cut short his remarks. He retreated in earnest haste, but with a final ferocious twist at his mustachios.

"We are to keep our heads," muttered Rafael, darkly. "It is easy to say, and

hard to do. I shall keep mine on my shoulders by staying indoors."

"It is safe; it is safe," answered his superior. "A single bullet would flatten against that skull of your's, a volley would stud it with a circle of lead, and render it impregnable!"

"It is a head that tells me I am a fool for coming here to work," retorted Rafael. "To-morrow I shall keep it at home."

Some moments after Rafael Hernandez had reached this consoling decision in the matter of the safety of his head upon the morrow, a machine gun battery swung into position a block from the eating-house known as *El Globo*, and swept the street clean of moving things. Throughout the performance, Rafael and his superior lay upon the stone floor in the kitchen of the restaurant and mingled with the roaches. At the end of an hour, they ventured to rise and survey the street before their door.

New figures had been added to the silent congregation of the block. Close at hand, however, a motionless object stirred suddenly, and began to crawl toward them. They shut the door and fled again to the kitchen.

"It is your time to carry her dinner to the Spanish lady," said the proprietor. "Luckily, it is not far. You can safely venture to the corner. The soldiers have gone."

"To-morrow I shall stay at home," said Rafael, "and the Spanish lady may go without her dinner."

The proprietor shrugged.

"To-morrow is to-morrow," he sagely observed.

With the laden tray in his hands, Rafael paused.

"I shall lose my head," he protested.

"Then," said his superior, "you need not come to work tomorrow."

At this novel thought, the *mesero* chuckled.

"If I lose my head," he threatened, moving away from the door, "I shall carry it back to you on my tray, and you may serve it to the Spanish lady tomorrow."

It was the proprietor's turn to chuckle.

Pleased by this exchange of compliments, Rafael strode briskly forward along the sidewalk. He walked with the easy swaying gait of a *mesero* carrying dinner to a Spanish lady. Behind him, but in the distance, the infernal rattle of machine guns persisted, punctuated at intervals by the heavier roar of rifle volleys. Suddenly it occurred to Rafael that the uproar was increasing in volume; that it was coming nearer. He was seized with quick panic. He walked more hurriedly, intent upon reaching and rounding the corner. It was a long block.

In a doorway, at the corner that was his immediate objective stood a soldier, smoking a cigarette. It was impossible to say to which side he belonged. As the *mesero* passed him, the soldier spoke sharply.

"Where are you going?"

"I am carrying her dinner to a Spanish lady," said Rafael, politely.

"A Spanish lady? Good! I shall go with you."

The soldier now smiled pleasantly, deeply inhaled, and blew a graceful cloud of smoke into the sunshine.

"My friend!" protested the *mesero*.  
"My friend—"

A company of soldiers appeared at

a rattle of wheels, and a babble of voices. A hoarse command echoed down to them. Then a gush of lead spouted through the canyon.

On the instant, the lone soldier in the doorway stepped out and laid a hand upon the *mesero's* arm. The hand fell away. The soldier who would have accompanied Rafael to the home of the Spanish lady, spun about ludicrously, coughing, and slumped down across the *mesero's* feet. The cigarette flew from his hand, and, striking squarely upon the curbing, rolled a few inches along the stone block. A little spiral of tobacco smoke blew upward from its tip in a curious design. To Rafael, it seemed to assume the contours of a mocking human face.

A sharp cry of terror broke from him. He spurned the tumbled body at his feet, and ran forward, carrying his tray level by force of habit. . . .

Then a sheet of lead cut through the street, with a sound like the buzzing of a thousand hornets, and the top half of Rafael Hernandez' head left its lower and stouter half, and fell forward into the tray.

For three strides, the action of the *mesero's* legs carried him forward, running, before the knees slumped and pitched him, with his grewsome burden, into the street.

Thus, for a short distance, Rafael Hernandez carried his head upon his tray, as he had promised; but as neither the proprietor of *El Globo* nor the Spanish lady who missed her dinner, knew anything about it, it is likely that Rafael's satisfaction, if it is possible for him to dwell upon it, is tinged with bitterness.



# Battle

BY MAXWELL ARMFIELD.

The stars in their courses  
Are fighting all the way;  
Across the lonely waste of sky  
They set them in array.  
With dim lethargic forces  
They war both night and day.

The stars in their courses  
Will fight for you and me  
As once they brought to Israel  
Above that Eastern sea,  
Against chaotic forces,  
An ordered harmony.

The rhythm of the universe  
They wield for sword, so strong  
That every little cloud of black  
That idly drifts along  
A formless way, with aim perverse,  
Is shapen into song.

We shall be shapen so. We too,  
With silent artistry,  
Into some universal chord  
Clear-colored like the sea,  
Woven forever through and through  
The starry symphony.

# Edgar Saltus: A Postscript

BY CARL VAN VECHTEN.

TWO phenomena, frequently recurring, are to be noted in the unfathomable history of American letters: one, the tremendous effect produced by comets whose effulgence for the time being completely eclipses the remainder of the literary milky way in the eyes of the public and the critics; and the other, the careless attitude assumed by these gentry towards the fixed stars. As a general rule, these true constellations are not observed at all until they have been shining for two or three decades, sometimes longer. When they are observed by their contemporaries, it is for the purpose of excoriating them for having the impertinence to pretend to shine.

Babbalanja, the mystical philosopher in Herman Melville's greatly underrated romance, "Mardi," has this to say of fame: "Not seldom to be famous, is to be widely known for what you are not, says Alla-Malolla. Whence it comes, as old Bardianna has it, that for years a man may move unnoticed among his fellows; but all at once, by some chance attitude, foreign to his habit, become a trumpet-full for fools; though, in himself, the same as ever."

Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville himself, and Ambrose Bierce, seemingly never struck this attitude and, as a consequence, they had to wait for fame until they could be admired for what they really were all the time.

I, too, have waxed epigrammatic on this theme: "Fame," I once wrote, "is

a quaint, old-fashioned body, who loves to be pursued. She seldom, if ever, runs after anybody except in her well-known role of necrophile."

On July 31, 1921, another illustrious obscurity in American letters, Edgar Saltus, died at the age of 63. A few book-collectors had found him out, but to the general public, although he had been writing since 1884 and had published over thirty books, his name is probably even less familiar than that of such a special figure as Ezra Pound or Paul Claudel. Will death bear him a belated laurel wreath?

## II.

In my paper in "The Merry-Go-Round," I do not think I understated or over-emphasized the case of Edgar Saltus. The neglect of this man is one of the most astounding phenomena in the scoriac history of our national literature. Benjamin de Casseres puts it thus: "There are three mysteries in American literature—the appearance of Edgar Allan Poe, the disappearance of Ambrose Bierce, and the burial alive of Edgar Saltus." A few months before he died, James Huneker wrote me: "Twenty years ago, Vance Thompson and I promised ourselves the pleasure of writing a definitive article on Edgar—and we didn't. Now you have done it and beautifully... Edgar is a genius. George Moore once told me that Walt Whitman and Saltus were the only two Americans he read." But let Mr. Moore, in a letter to me, speak for himself: "I

was especially interested in your review of Edgar Saltus, for it has always been a puzzle to me why he did not achieve a really memorable piece of work. I attach much importance to the writer's name; some people think undue importance. However that may be, Edgar Saltus seems at first sight an inspiring name, yet it did not inspire the owner. Edgar Saltus is cultivated and possessed by a brain and style—the equipment is perfect and we sit agape when we think of him."

Saltus was the son of Victor Hugo by Schopenhauer. Strange bedfellows these! Their marital antics have resulted in strange children. His fictions are experiments in decorative irony; they are pessimistic allegories. His best works in this form, "Mr. Incoul's Misadventure" and "The Truth About Tristrem Varick," both date from the eighties. The first shows how cruel a thing is abstract justice; the second exhibits a pursuit of the ideal, which lands the idealist in the electric chair. While these books are superior, even such flamboyant romances as "The Pace That Kills," "Madam Sapphira," and "A Transaction in Hearts" are lyric melodramas, written with ecstasy. There is about them something of the hard brilliant glitter of Webster and Tourneur.

Saltus experimented in history, fiction, poetry, literary criticism, and philosophy, but his masterpiece, of course, is "Imperial Purple." The soaring splendor of this book remained unsurpassed by its author. Indeed, it is rare in all literature. Page after page that Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde or J. K. Huysmans would have proudly

signed, might be set before you. The man writes with invention, with sap, with urge. The historical form has at last found a poet to render it supportable. Blood flows across the pages; slaughter and booty are the principal themes; and yet Beauty struts triumphant through the horror.

Late in life he tried to repeat this performance in his history of the Romanoffs, published as "The Imperial Orgy." I prefer Saltus's original title, "Imperial Sables." In this book, he deliberately shut his eyes to all extenuating circumstances. It reeks of gore. It is a lithograph printed in blood.

Of his style Oscar Wilde once remarked: "In Edgar Saltus's work, passion struggles with grammar on every page." It might, indeed, be said of him, as León Bloy wrote of Huysmans, that he dragged "his images by the heels or the hair up and down the worm-eaten staircase of terrified syntax." But, repeating this phrase, we should be wise to remember that "grammar" and "glamour" stem from the same root. Percival Pollard pictured Saltus as "an author drunken with his own phrases," "a dervish dancing in his prose." He never wrote from his heart; he seldom, indeed, wrote from his brain; he wrote with his nerves.

### III.

Of the man himself little is known. That much is not pleasant. He was an egoist, seldom with a good word for another author, sensitive, bitter, cynical, and at times, perhaps, even malicious. In the nineties he had known such men as Oscar Wilde, Edgar Fawcett and J. K. Huysmans. He knew then, too, Vance Thompson and James Huneker.



For the past twenty years, however, he had withdrawn from the world. He had few, if any, friends. Huneker in 1920 told me that he had not seen him for ten years. He appeared pretty regularly at the Manhattan Club in Madison Square for his mail and for a whisky and soda, until prohibition cut even this from him.

He was a strangely distinguished figure, something of a dandy, handsome in his youth, if one can judge from his pictures, and later, while more massive, still inspiring, short, but with the head of a personage. Curiously enough, he really *looked* like a man of letters. He is the only author I have ever seen who did.

There may have been reasons for his bitterness. I have heard that he suffered reverses of fortune in Wall Street, which necessitated alterations in his mode of living. Then, while he carefully and tenderly worked at his miniature jewelled masterpieces, he watched the glory go to his inferiors. Galling enough, no doubt. More than all, he stuttered, a physical affliction which cuts many softer personalities away from social intercourse.

I have set down a few plausible excuses for the unpleasant impression his manner and his conversation created when finally I met him. But, all the same, I do not think he had changed. In the early nineties, he was the same acidulous cynic, the same caustic wit. In 1891, his first wife divorced him. In an interview, published in a newspaper of the period, Saltus is quoted as saying

of his father-in-law, whom he blamed for the action, "I shall not forget Mr. Read. He shall have a divorce from my bed and board, the alimony for which he has asked as well. Now that the charges he made are withdrawn I can refuse him nothing. I have put him down in my will. He is a member of the Society for the Protection of Animals, and in recognition of his affection for beasts, I have left him a mirror—with reversion to his charming representatives at the bar." It also must be remembered, in any consideration of his philosophy, that "The Philosophy of Disenchantment," "The Anatomy of Negation," "Mr. Incoul's Misadventure," and "The Truth About Tristrem Varick," even the titles of which are revealing, were all published in the eighties. He was born doubting the world and its women. Nevertheless, it seems that he was married three times!

Thus we must accept him in his own trenchant humor. He was sufficiently inhuman so that he could not create a human character. But this is not dispraise. It is exact description of his morbid, erotic art, often inspiring dread and amazement, but never pity. His extraordinary style, of which he was master from his first book (a study of Balzac) insures him readers, who will now doubtless flock to him in greater numbers. And it will be no surprise to his admirers to find him finally allotted a definite niche in American literature, somewhere between those occupied by Edgar Allan Poe and William Dean Howells.

# Jazz

BY JOHN McCLURE.

*With trombones snarling  
And rattling drum,  
Brass pans clanging,  
The jongleurs come.*

*There goes Adam  
Who will not die!  
Thunder of kettledrum  
Leads him by.*

*(Babylon is dead and gone  
Thirty centuries:  
Adam beat a kettledrum  
There like this.)*

*With trombones snarling  
And clanging brass,  
Cymbals and kettledrums,  
The jongleurs pass.*



# Agatha

BY LOUIS GILMORE.

*Agatha has  
A white room  
With hangings  
Of China silk  
And pastorals  
In porcelain  
On the mantle.*

*In a bandbox  
On a top shelf  
Of a closet  
In the wall  
Are curious  
Images.*

# Reviews

## "CONCORD, MASS., 1840-1860"

(A Piano Sonata by Charles E. Ives.)

THERE is much "tumult and shouting" about the American composer and American music, much calling upon the heavens to witness that the great cause of star-spangled opera and symphony has suffered from neglect at the hands of impresarios and conductors, much dark muttering against sinister foreign influences that prevent our own eaglets from singing their just and due songs from proscenium arch and concert platform. Sometimes the American composer himself joins in the outcry to the decided impairment of his dignity and the dignity of music in general.

Music is always just music, neither *American* music, nor *French* music, nor *Spanish* music, but *music*—the universal voice of thought and feeling on a high plane—taking on sometimes the accidental color and characteristics of immediate surroundings. Its *national* character is but a superficial difference in idiom—rhythm, harmony and melodic contour. No serious musical mind can be interested in the *applique* of Indian or negro characteristics as artificial decorations of compositions which do not spring from an Indian or negro manner of thinking. On the other hand any effort which goes deeper into some mode of thought or manner of living essentially and exclusively American must interest as a movement in the direction of artistic integrity. Again, it would not be the "national" characteristics which would have value, save

as they grew flowerlike from bole and branch,—it would be the value of some unique phase of our North American life brought to artistic expression . . . In the midst of all the furore, critical and uncritical, about contemporary music, one is rather stunned to discover a new composer who has quietly written three symphonies, four violin sonatas, a string quartet, two suites for orchestra, two piano sonatas and two hundred and fifty songs. One is still more interested when one is informed that the composer is a Yale graduate, a pupil of Horatio Parker and that he was "raised on Bach and Beethoven." The interest becomes astonishment when printed score of one of the larger works reveals music unlike anything one has seen before—a broad, strong and original style with no recognizable derivations from Debussy, Strauss or Stravinsky. You will look in vain through publisher's catalogs or concert programs or the anecdotal columns of self-advertising—you will not find the name of Charles Ives, composer of the monumental piano sonata which bears the unusual title, "Concord, Mass., 1840-60."

The sonata appears in a handsome, cloth-bound volume of seventy-two pages. Concerning it and his ideas about it, the composer writes: "The sonata is an experiment which perhaps goes too far. It was not written primarily to be played—certainly not to be played with two hands. This is the first of a series which I propose to have similarly printed and thrown at the music fraternity—chancing that a few



may be interested. In this way, you see, no one has to buy the music, sell it, play it, or listen to it—except with both eyes open; there is no audience to throw things at the performer or the composer; the artist does not have to risk his reputation, nor the publisher his capital, and the music public is left in peace to work out its own salvation (whatever that means), and I to do the same without disturbing anyone but the neighbors.”

From the Knickerbocker Press comes a volume by Mr. Ives called “Essays Before a Sonata,” which is inscribed—“These prefatory essays were written by the composer for those who can’t stand his music—and the music for those who can’t stand his essays, to those who can’t stand either, the whole is respectfully dedicated.”

The sonata is divided into four movements entitled in order, *Emerson*, *Hawthorne*, “*The Alcotts*,” *Thoreau*. The essays announce that the whole is an attempt to present one person’s impression of the spirit of transcendentalism that is associated in the mind of many with Concord, Mass., of over a half century ago. This is undertaken in impressionistic pictures of Emerson and Thoreau, a sketch of the Alcotts and a Scherzo supposed to reflect a lighter quality which is often found in the fantastic side of Hawthorne. The first and last movements do not aim to give any program of the life, or of any particular work, of either Emerson or Thoreau, but rather composite pictures or impressions. They are, however, so general in outline that from some viewpoints, they may be as far from accepted impressions (from true conceptions,

for that matter) as the valuation which they purport to be of the influence of the life, thought, and character of Emerson and Thoreau is inadequate.

Turning to the book we find a score without time or key signature and no measure divisions. Certain rhythmical divisions supply guidance. The music is broad and stately, the rhythmic arches are very wide. No fixed tonality, no rhythmic unity. It sways as freely as a tree top in the wind. Indeed there is no unity of idea in the sense that one part grows out of another. One feels only a psychic kind of connection that might in this case reasonably be called a musical logic. The Emerson movement is as majestic and free as clouds with the certainty of carved bronze. It is enormously difficult to play. It is truly doubtful if the composer meant it to be played—many places require a rearrangement or recasting unless an extra player is utilized.

Themes and chords move against and over each other in the style of chordal counterpoint met with in Casella. Again there are passage complexities offering as much resistance to digital solution as those of Malipiero. The effects resemble those of neither of these composers. The only resemblance the writer finds to any composer is in the Emerson movement when certain contours recall Strauss. Even this is a resemblance that strikes the eye rather than the ear.

This first movement is not pianistic—little of the sonata is—probably no effort was made to make any part of it pianistic. It must have been conceived abstractly. One misses, almost through-

out familiar pianistic outlines. In reading it away from the piano there is almost the feeling of perusing an orchestral score. The hand does not unconsciously grope for the keyboard. Yet many purely pianistic effects are contrived and effectively used. The beauty of this division of the work is severe and difficult. It is a beauty of high and remote things. It is austere. It is informed with the stark and ascetic beauty of lonely and alien reaches of human imagination.

The second movement given to Hawthorne "does not attempt the fundamental part of Hawthorne which has to do with the influence of sin upon the conscience, but tries to suggest some of the wilder, fantastical adventures into the half-child life, half-fairy life fantastical realms." The entire movement is fantastic in the extreme—light and delicate for the most part—and depends for a fine interpretation on the player's familiarity with and understanding of Hawthorne's place in the world of strange, elfish and supernatural things. Some pages of *Hawthorne*, like some pages of the *Emerson*, are not practical for one player, such as Page 25 which requires combination of notes to be held down with a block of wood for the production of harmonic effects. There are occasional measure divisions in this movement. On pages 40 and 41 is a climax of Ornstein-like fury but used to finer purpose.

"*The Alcotts*" is the shortest movement, only five pages and is in every way the simplest. It boasts occasional time signatures and, for a few lines on the first page, a key signature of two flats in the right hand and four in the left.

There is a simple quiet beauty about "*The Alcotts*." It and the *Hawthorne* are more obviously successful, because more *external* than either *Emerson* or *Thoreau*.

The Thoreau movement, closing the sonata, is perhaps even more difficult to understand than the Emerson movement, certainly more difficult to play. But as a portrait of the man, a re-creation of his way of thinking, a meditation upon him and his life and his thought, a resultant philosophical attitude of mind in the reader, it is finer and more successful than *Emerson*. It is close in texture, more pianistically playable, than *Emerson*, and perhaps holds the interest better. For a few lines there is opportunity to use a flute. It seems better to the writer to permit this to remain an abstraction as its introduction breaks the mood. Most of the movement exists in a superb twilight and is, according to the composer's directions, to be played in a lower dynamic ratio.

Is it a great work? Is it successful? Is this a direction music may legitimately take? Each student must answer these questions for himself. There will be as many reactions as there are individuals coming in contact with it—probably all of them different. One asks in turn: What do you demand of music? What do *you* get out of it? *What equipment, literary, philosophical and musical do you bring to it?*

The composer admits that perhaps his experiment has gone too far. Most interestingly, he wishes to have another try at it.

But no serious student, having as a background a knowledge of the amazing

achievements of modern music can help feeling that Mr. Ives' sonata is a piece of work sincerely done, and if a failure, a rather splendid one.

Certainly it must be considered in a class by itself. Conceived independently of any instrumental idiom, it must be regarded as an essay of lofty thought and feeling expressed in musical notation. One arises from a reading of it with much, much more of satisfaction than dissatisfaction. Its loftiness of purpose is evident; its moments of achievement elevating and greatly beautiful.

HENRY BELLAMANN.



## A RECENT MOTLEY

"Things That Have Interested Me," by Arnold Bennett. (*George H. Doran Co.*)

"Authors and I," by C. Lewis Hind. (*John Lane Co.*)

"Books on the Table," by Edmund Gosse. (*Scribner's.*)

"Impressions and Comments; Second Series," by Havelock Ellis. (*Houghton, Mifflin Co.*)

"The Art of Letters," by Robert Lynd. (*Scribner's.*)

"The Sacred Wood," by T. S. Eliot. (*Alfred A. Knopf.*)

**C**OLLECTING is being done this year; rather overdone, in fact. Collections of poems, essays, reviews, paragraphs, comments, odds and ends—the by-products of certain more or less eminent authors—are being hastily gathered together between attractive covers and thrust upon an un-

suspecting public. Authors who undoubtedly know better, have succumbed to this disease, this collectomania, which is raging unchecked in the literary world. One can almost see them—methodically or frantically, according to temperament—emptying pigeonholes, going through old trunks and boxes, standing on ladders before dusty topshelves in the hope of discovering old diaries or notebooks or forgotten scribblings. When these are not available the dauntless author makes up a book of choice selections recently published in the magazines. One qualification only seems necessary for a 'collected' book—it must be scrappy, disjointed, hard to read.

Arnold Bennett is an offender with his "Things That Have Interested Me" (*George H. Doran Co.*) An alluring title. One buys such a book instinctively. (Canny Mr. Bennett!) Remembering the sheer delight so often given in the past by Mr. Bennett, one can—perhaps—be unselfishly glad that he was interested. But why, *why*? One hates to think less of the author of "The Old Wives Tale" but—really, the less said the better. This is the sort of literary *faux pas* that his admirers are anxious to forget.

Mr. C. Lewis Hind has been collecting also. "Authors and I" (*John Lane Co.*) is the result of his search. There are impressions of fifty-eight authors, one impression apiece, and two impressions of Mr. Hind by way of a conclusion. Henry Adams, Gabriele d'Annunzio, Bret Harte, W. E. Henley, Alice Meynell, Tolstoy, Mrs. Humphrey Ward and Walt Whitman are among the number



discussed. It is a neat, chatty book, designed to give one the pleasantly superior feeling of moving easily in good company. At times it is inclined to be facetious and it is distressingly whimsical.

Then there is Edmund Gosse. His "Books on the Table" (Scribner's) is interesting, even delightful in spots, though the sketches it contains are unsatisfactorily short—"miniature monographs," he calls them. But taken as a whole, as a book, it is annoying. The sketches are too brief, the transition from Pascal to Mrs. Asquith is too rapid, and there are so many of these transitions. It leaves one with a slightly dazed feeling, tired, as though one had come out from the midst of much confusion, from a place where many people talked at once on unrelated subjects and here and there one had caught snatches of the conversations. There is a sketch on Count D'Orsay's portraits. What a gracious figure of romance he was, as much to his own day as to ours. A certain glamour surrounded him always—even at the last, in adversity—Byron's "Cupidon dechainé," with his great charm, his beauty, his talents.

Havelock Ellis' "Impressions and Comments, Second Series" (Houghton Mifflin Co.) is a sort of "mutilated diary." There seems more reason for its publication than for that of most books of the kind. Mr. Ellis goes behind the outside of many things, of everyday things which one is accustomed to take for granted, and reveals their curious beauty. A haunting loveliness which is, after all, quite simple and

obvious, but which often remains unperceived for lack of someone to point it out—someone of Mr. Ellis' keenness and broad sympathies. Take for instance, this passage upon hard facts. "As one grows older one's attitude towards facts changes. One begins to see through them. So far from being hard they now seem remarkably soft, even when one thinks one has, with much trouble, succeeded at last in finding them. The most boldly statistical facts are shifting every moment, and they are the most relatively solid of all facts; even when it seems not so, they are still susceptible of endlessly different interpretations. You can stick your fist through them at any point. The only hard facts one learns to see as one gets older, are the facts of feeling. Emotion and sentiment are, after all, incomparably more solid than any statistics. So that when one wanders back in memory through the field of life one has traversed, as I have, in diligent search of hard facts, one comes back bearing in one's arms a Sheaf of Feelings. They after all are the only facts hard enough to endure as long as life itself endures."

Mr. Robert Lynd's contribution to this year's collections is "The Art of Letters" (Scribner's). It is not so good as his "Old and New Masters". One hesitates to say that it is not good at all, for it is a sober, conscientious, painstaking effort, a very worthy book, no doubt, but tiresome—very tiresome. Mr. Pepys, William Cowper, The Office of the Poets, The Politics of Swift and Shakespeare, Tennyson, Oscar Wilde and Professor Irving Babbitt are among

the variety of subjects dealt with in these essays. Mr. Lynd's book is thoughtful, it is sincere, it is well written, its subject matter is undeniably interesting, yet it lacks some vital thing. It all seems very far away and hopelessly long ago—even Mr. Babbitt—and one's attention is not held. Is it that in most of the essays one misses the leaven of the author's personality?

Not one of this year's collections is in any way comparable to Mr. T. S. Eliot's fine book of last year, "The Sacred Wood." That was a collection of critical essays with an authentic *raison d'être*. One would not complain of collectomania if it resulted in more books of that kind. But, as it is, one complains bitterly. Attracted by an author's name or by an enticing paragraph or title one buys these unnatural books—and repents at leisure.

ALICE SESSUMS LEVY.



## EDGAR A. POE, A STUDY

By JOHN W. ROBERTSON, M. D.

(Bruce Brough, San Francisco, 1921.)

**A** BIT incoherently, a bit garrulously, and with a frankly biased enthusiasm, the last word on Poe would seem to have been written. If this seems too strong, then let us say the penultimate word. For years, as Harrison, one of his biographers, pointed out, the necessity has been for a thorough and scientific diagnosis of Poe's case by a competent neurologist. Dr. Robertson of the Livermore Sanitarium, San Francisco, a Poe enthusiast and collector, has furnished this diagnosis. Physically, the book is enormous

—428 pages, royal octavo—but it is all here. Under cataracts of rhetoric and cloudbursts of denunciation, the truth bears up and makes itself evident. Griswold, Baudelaire, Lauvriere, Woodberry, all come in for a share of the doctor's withering criticism, particularly Griswold, Poe's executor and villifier, who is dubbed throughout "the unfaithful servant who betrayed his trust"—and this is quite the mildest thing the doctor says about him.

The volume is divided into two parts, a psychopathic study and a bibliographic study. In the former, there is no palliation of Poe's derelictions or of the flagrant nature of his discourtesies to his contemporaries. Dr. Robertson, a specialist in dipsomania, treats frankly and scientifically of Poe the dipsomaniac, the victim of hereditary compulsion, the neurotic, the genius. He says:

"A study of Poe's heredity and life work makes it plain that many of Griswold's allegations, even when true, cannot justly be charged against Poe, but rather against his morbid heredity. If this seems too fine a distinction, at least we must recognize the fact that, by reason of this heredity, Poe was not always to be held responsible either for his words or his acts, for his great accomplishments or his lapses, heredity was as much responsible for the one as for the other; his heritage was pregnant with both good and evil."

Follows then a re-statement of the life of Poe, beginning with his ancestors, in which many errors are corrected and many new facts adduced. There is a touch of the Puritan about the doctor that makes him a bit preachy when he refers to Poe's "moral delinquencies

and alcoholic excesses," and a bit apologetic when he explains them away by the psychopathic method, but for the most part he is just and not too intolerant of the "evil" so inextricably mixed with his hero's "good." And he very properly despises the professional Poe apologists, while heartily abusing the colder-blooded biographers who sought to justify the Griswold charges. In short, he proves conclusively that Poe was neither the Jekyll of Gill nor the Hyde of Griswold. One does not entirely agree with the doctor, however, in his obvious belief that biographers should avoid the indiscretions and foibles of their subjects, and paint only their triumphs and greatnesses. It may not be important to know that Keats took snuff, but it is interesting, while the dyspeptic foibles of Carlyle as revealed by Froude are of distinct critical and biographical value. When the derelictions or follies of a public character as written down are falsehoods, however, even exaggerations, the case calls for a champion of a lively mettle; and Poe has found his champion in Dr. Robertson.

The doctor's onslaught upon Griswold is a delight; his description of him, classic. It reminds one of Poe. That Griswold was a reptile is very well proven indeed. Others who feel the point of the doctor's pen are Woodberry, Dr. Moran, Baudelaire and Lauvriere, although none of these are abused. Woodberry is shown to have been unsympathetic if not antipathetic, Moran to have been too gallant and a bit unscrupulous, and the French writers to have done Poe a disservice while endeavoring to do him a service. There is

some excellent criticism in the doctor's remarks on the critical attitudes of Baudelaire and Lauvriere, although one warms to the former, whose stand (with reference to the Griswold allegations) was an eloquent shrug and a "What then?"

The second part of the volume comprehends a complete and valuable bibliography of Poe. It is, however, like no other bibliography under the canopy. The doctor is a book collector, be it remembered, a Poe collector in particular, and he is a loquacious individual. Whole pages and more intervene frequently between the chronologically listed items; these are devoted by the ardent collector to essays on book collecting, and detailed narratives of his discovery of certain rare numbers and his joy thereat. He mentions his bookseller friends who have sold him the volumes, and with his arm across their shoulders describes their shops and mourns the Thackeray items he would have liked to have bought. He conducts exciting rows with the authors of the biographies and commentaries. He rambles. He meanders. He sails boats in the bath tub and slides down cellar doors. He enjoys himself immensely. After a while he gets around to the next item on the list. But it is all very cordial and genial, his adjectives are rampant, and he is nothing if not enthusiastic.

This big, sprawling "study" (excellently printed and bound, by the way) is an admirable companion, and a genuinely important contribution to Poe *ana*. It is not nearly as formidable as it looks, and while undoubtedly the long disquisitions and the relentless reminiscence of the second part have no place



in the volume, one would not like to see the volume otherwise. Let the second edition be abridged and furnished with an index, and issued at a lower price; the present edition will always delight the collector.

VINCENT STARRETT.



## AND THE SPHINX SPOKE.

By PAUL ELDRIDGE.

(*The Stratford Co.*, 1921.)

**B**ENJAMIN DE CASSERES has written an admirable introduction to this book, in which he hails Paul Eldridge as a spirit as rare as Poe, Baudelaire, or Leopardi.

"In his exquisitely chiselled imprecations," Mr. DeCasseres says, referring to "*Vanitas*," Paul Eldridge's book of poems which was published by the Stratford Company last year, "I recognized a man who was of their high aristocratic lineage; one who existed on their spiritual and intellectual plane; one who was heir to the Dreadful Vision; one who had ripped the veil from the face of Isis—and who was not afraid."

All that Mr. De Casseres says of Paul Eldridge is good. I shall return to it. His praise of the author of "*Vanitas*," and of "*And the Sphinx Spoke*" is high praise, but I do not think he has said a word too much.

Paul Eldridge has ripped the veil from the face of Isis. And yet to me the interesting thing about his work is not that it shows that he has ripped that veil away; many, as a matter of fact, have ripped it away, and many stare at

the Sphinx with as unblinking an eye as Paul Eldridge. The interesting thing to me is his reaction to the vision malefic.

Most men see in the futility of existence an excellent justification for cakes and ale. Paul Eldridge draws the deduction that "life is mud." He does not seem to have entered as yet those pleasant pastures on the further side of Nihilism where nothing matters the quirk of a cow's tail anyhow, evil is as futile as good, and, between two well-recognized futilities, one may as well choose the pleasanter. Arch-pessimism, arch-nihilism is the most comfortable condition in the world. Paul Eldridge seems to be reading the primer of pessimism. He is in that slough of despond out of which have sprung some of the most beautiful artistic productions we know.

And as a matter of fact, we can be grateful for his despondency. Ten years ago, when Paul Eldridge was an optimist, he could not write.

"*And the Sphinx Spoke*" is a volume of prose tales and prose fancies, of which Mr. De Casseres says in his introduction: "The stories and prose poems in this book are among the unique things in American literature." Some of them are, certainly. Paul Eldridge is a rare artist, an artist for America to be proud of. He is a strange spirit, a fly-by-night sort of an elf, who takes on more and more importance. His imagery, his deftness at words, when he is at his best, is magnificent. I quote one image from this book: "The old woman lay outstretched in the unpolished coffin... The room was still



very neat. The old woman had always been a very fine housekeeper. She would raise her bony, bent body as some thin dog that stands on his hind legs, and would clean every speck upon the walls and the humble furniture."

In the volume I like best "Paradise Regained," "An Old Woman Falling Asleep," "Dead Leaves" (because it contains the image quoted above and some others), "Crosses," and the excellent "Pastels," which make up the last part of the book.

"The Chinese Doll," (which Mr. De Casseres says is "one of the most powerful and most perfect things in any literature—neither Baudelaire nor Poe has ever done anything better") is a very gruesome conception, well done, and certainly powerful. I do not like it. I prefer not to read it again. This reaction itself is a tribute to the artist, perhaps. Poe's "Bernice" is a masterly production, I dare say, but I skip it when I read his tales.

Some of the book, in my opinion, is dull, and a good deal of it ordinary. I am not impressed by "The Golden Wedding," "A Culprit," "Their Dreams," "Time," "Three Men," or "Worms and Butterflies," tales which fill a good many pages.

I am quite sure that Paul Eldridge, as yet, is at his best in his verse. But when his work is done, quite probably he will have produced an equal amount of prose and verse, both equally good. He is not, after all, it seems to me, attempting particularly to write verse or particularly to write prose: he is expressing in the appropriate medium the crowding conceptions of a rare imagination. It is perhaps the conception in

all his work, rather than the technique or the medium, though his technique is often exquisite, which gives it charm. He is a man of ideas, an artist of ideas.

No bad work he has done or may do—and I am sure he has done, like everyone else, some very wretched stuff—can detract from the magnificent bits of pessimism and of beauty which he has scattered here and there in "Vanitas," in magazines and in "And the Sphinx Spoke." Those who desire to familiarize themselves with what is best in contemporary American letters, cannot overlook Paul Eldridge. His best work stands.

And some of it is in "And the Sphinx Spoke."

"The ten thousand worth writing for," to whom Mr. De Casseres refers, will want this book and Paul Eldridge's next one.

JOHN MCCLURE.



## WILLOW POLLEN.

By JEANNETTE MARKS.

(*The Four Seas Company, 1921.*)

The chief strength of the work in this volume of poems, I believe, lies in descriptive phrases, words that materialize sensory visions. The author is not an adept in the art of verse. There are excellent "high spots" of expression in the book and there is magic in at least two of the poems, "Ebony" and "Two Candles." But generally one's impression of the volume is likely to be that the conceptions, often extremely good, are not done justice in the handling. The author has a fertile and a

poetic imagination. The weakness of the work is in form and not in content.

Of the poems I like best "Ebony," "Two Candles," "Willow Pollen," "The Railroad Station," "Peddled Joy," "Journey's End," "Thatch," "Ravello," "Gold and Ivory."

There are excellent lines in poems which I have not named:

"In the afternoon

Shaken light burns in the memory of her hair."

from "Proem," and

"How shall a tinker mend  
A pinch of dust?"

from "Everywhere," and a score of others.

The conceptions are frequently beautiful. The technique is, too often, unsatisfactory. My impression of the volume as a whole is one almost of formlessness. I feel a lack of artistry.

By form, it goes without saying, I do not mean meter and rhyme. A good line in verse is as easily recognizable as a good line on canvas. It may be too delicately modulated to scan just as a curve may be too exquisitely undulating to be a parabola. Beauty of form is something that cannot be measured precisely in either the vocal or graphic arts. It is a matter of instinct or intuition. Form may be superb in vers libre—Adelaide Crapsey and Ezra Pound, and Walt Whitman before them, have proved that. But it is a necessity in all good art. A definite, unfaltering and adequate stroke must be evident in the delineation of the idea.

In general I fail to detect form, as a beautiful thing in itself, in "Willow Pollen." Some of the lines are beauti-

ful. All honor to them. Some of the conceptions are beautiful, and a beautiful conception of course is better than beautiful form that is empty. But the body of the work in "Willow Pollen" seems almost formless. The general impression is vague and diffused. One feels that the poet must, in order to give us what we treasure most in verse, work toward a firmer technique.

"Willow Pollen" is a good book. I recommend it to readers of poetry. But it could have been better. Jeannette Marks could have made it better.

JOHN MCCLURE.



## BOOKS RECEIVED

BRASS: *A Novel of Marriage*, by Charles G. Norris (*E. P. Dutton Co.*)

SECOND APRIL, by Edna St. Vincent Millay (*Mitchell Kennerly*).

THE NARROW HOUSE, by Evelyn Scott (*Boni and Liveright*).

BLIND MICE, by C. Kay Scott (*George H. Doran Co.*)

THE GREAT WAY, by Horace Fish (*Mitchell Kennerly*).

THE STORY OF A POET: MADISON CAWEIN, by Otto A. Rothert (*Filson Club Publications: No. 30, Morton & Co., Louisville, Ky.*)

GARMENTS OF PRAISE, by Florence Converse (*E. P. Dutton Co.*)

COINS AND MEDALS, by Charlotte Hardin (*The Four Seas Co.*)

FAGOTS OF FANCY, by Scottie McKenzie Frasier (*Progressive Publisher, Wheeling, W. Va.*)

DICTIONARY OF SLANG AND COLLOQUIAL, ENGLISH (Abridged), by John S. Farmer & W. E. Henley (*London Geo. Rutledge & Sons, Ltd. New York, E. P. Dutton Co.*)

EDGAR ALLEN POE: *How To Know Him*, by C. Alphons Smith (*Bobbs-Merrill Co.*)

And several others reviewed in this issue.



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# SHOP TALK

**D**ESPITE detractors, wiseacres, a lean purse and its name (so offensive to pharisees) *THE DOUBLE DEALER* goes forward. Our friends are, in the manner of friends, magnanimous. Our enemies bruit us bravely. What more can we ask? And yet the months of August and September—dog days in journalism—have been quick with press notices, for the most part, pleasant.

Mr. Mencken, in the August number of *Smart Set*, in an article, "The South Begins to Mutter," has a deal to say pro and con *The D. D.* To our credit, be it stated, though with all due modesty, mostly *pro*. Mr. Finger, in *Alls Well* for September, good-naturedly but very solemnly, controverts Mr. Mencken's remarks, but gets us "all wrong" when, in speaking of *The Reviewer* (Richmond) and our own *D. D.*, he says: "In those behind these institutions I see the modern prototypes of men who, three centuries ago, gave their bodies to be burned with peculiar obstinacy rather than deny or affirm the royal supremacy." We smirk. If Mr. Finger could meet the bunch down here, he would arrive at quite another conclusion.

The August *Current Opinion* quotes poems from our June issue by William Alexander Percy and William Griffith. The September number of the same magazine reprints in full Vincent Starrett's "How Felipe Looked Out of a Window," the first of a series of "Little Tales of Mexico" (the second story appears in this issue) calling it, "a mordant little tale, full of local color and sardonic humor, told with an art that reminds one of Maupassant." Further on in its pages one's attention is arrested by an article captioned "New Mutterings in Southern Literature," devoted to a rehash of the Mencken-Finger debate, wherein *The D. D.* is meted its dole of crumbs.

Editorials in Richmond, Atlanta, Santa Fe, Chicago and New York papers: quotations of poems, such as J. Vandervoort Sloan's "Life and Sleep" by New York and Washington dailies; press and periodical comment, decidedly encouraging, from Frisco to Dublin, complete a very catholic and stimulating spread. But we are not apt to be deluded, nor in any manner influenced, by anything whatever that has been said about us. We know our play. The critics and the public have, like good Mr. Finger, "got us wrong." Wait a bit and see.

Meanwhile we pledge an entertaining number for November. Babette Deutsch comes in with two excellent and daring poems; Vincent Starrett with a notable appraisal, "The Passing of James Branch Cabell"; Arthur Symons with an article on modern violinists; Edith Chapman, Israel Solon and Lafcadio Hearn (posthumously) contribute stories; Alfred Kreymborg, John V. A. Weaver and Stephen Ta Van, essays; Carl Sandburg, Edward Sapir, John McClure, Alice Corbin Henderson and Laura Benet, poetry; and perhaps, though not yet agreed, we may decide to print an unpublished story by Hubert Crackanthorpe, "A Fellside Tragedy." A variety of victuals, food for all minds. In army parlance—"Come and get it"

THE D. D.

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